Girol Karacaoglu

MEANING without HOPE -

authentic living

For those who have the courage to choose authentic living.

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

(Socrates)

"If you wish to strive for peace of soul and happiness, then believe; if you wish to be a disciple of truth, then inquire."

(Nietzsche)

"Life begins on the other side of despair."

(Sartre)

"Perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in this incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself, and not in the thing to be attained […] He feels that when he has found it there will be nothing for him to look for."

(Dostoyevsky)

"I regard freedom, political freedom as well as a free and open mind, as one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, value that our life can offer us."

(Karl Popper)

"Life's need to survive will establish order in the universe."

(Frank Tipler)

Also, by Girol Karacaoglu

An Introduction to Financial Markets in New Zealand (1988)—edited.

Intergenerational well-being and public policy—an integrated environmental, social, and economic framework (2019)—with Anita King and Jacek B Krawczyk.

Public policy and governance frontiers in New Zealand (2020)—edited with Evan Berman.

Social policy practice and processes in Aotearoa New Zealand (2021)—edited with Graham Hassall.

Love You—public policy for intergenerational well-being (2021).

Resilient democratic governance—navigating unity in diversity for sustainable well-being (2024).

No to pessimism – Life, Diversity, Freedom, and Knowledge, with Optimism (2025).

Table of Contents

Preface ……... 6

Introduction …… 11

I. Unity of nature: Life, relational processes, emergence with purpose…… 17

II. Human life and the human condition ……26

III. Human mind, consciousness, and awareness … 29

IV. Explanatory knowledge and understanding..... 32

V. Suffering and search for meaning …… 43

VI. Unity of the mind …..…….……...… 50

VII. Community life as an emergent process …. 55

VIII. Freedom and liberty …….…….. 88

IX. Universality and resilience …….…… 109

X. Communalism - emergent community life …. 126

XI. Optimism …….. 141

XII. Closing the circle …… 161

References …….. 163

About the author ……..... 178

End notes …… 179

Preface

You are conceived and pushed out into this world without your consent.

You have no say on who you are born to, where or when.

Nor do you get to choose your gender, skin color, body shape, or innate capacities and capabilities.

As you gain consciousness, you become aware of your existence and predicament. You have been abandoned to a life that ends in death, with nothing after that - there is no redemption or hope.

You start wondering. What am I here for? Why here and now? Who am I? What is life all about? What should I do? How should I live my life? You want to understand.

The universe greets your questions with total indifference and silence. Life does not come with a manual on how to live.

Faced with this absurdity, you must decide for yourself – you are condemned to choose.

Should I, *exit*, *believe*, *escape*, or *rebel*

You can commit suicide – quit - *exit*.

Deceive yourself by hoping for life after death – seeking comfort in immortality – in redemption - *believe*.

Try not to think about it – hide behind pleasure – drug yourself - *escape*.

Embrace authentic living – treat life as a gift - create your own meaning – *rebel*.

The very great majority of human beings choose not to quit; they reveal a strong preference for going on living whatever life throws at them. This choice is grounded in human nature – the instinct to survive. They then use a mixture of all three coping mechanisms to carry on with their lives.

The book is dedicated to those who have the courage to choose the path of authentic living – rejecting belief or escape. Embracing life on its own terms, as a gift representing its own reward, creating one's own meaning in a hopeless world, and taking every opportunity to reduce suffering around them, without hoping for redemption - giving without expecting.

I want everyone to have the opportunity to choose authentic living in responding to the absurdity of the universe in which they find themselves. Having been presented with that opportunity, should an individual or community decide to follow another path that is perfectly fine with me. Every individual and community should be free to choose the life they wish to live.

The absurdity of life and the anguish associated with coping with it is the ultimate source of human suffering – it defines the human condition. And the rebellion against it through authentic living is the source, indeed a necessary condition, for human creativity using humans' distinctive gift – the human mind.

Human suffering is a form of cancer – cancer of the soul. Incurable, all absorbing. But not terminal. Not painful. Just a permanent feeling of despair. It is integral to the human condition – it is unavoidable. It serves a purpose – it is necessary for human creativity. Without it, human beings would have no incentive to seek meaning in this life, by activating and using the creative capacity of their mind. Freedom, autonomy, and social cohesion provide the antidotes that guide the collective minds' creative activities towards 'good' (as distinct from 'evil') 'attractors'.

My personal preference for authentic living, over belief and escape, reflects a judgement that the latter two are a form of acceptance of suffering, whereas authentic living is a rebellion against suffering – its rejection through flourishing. Suffering is pervasive. Having the opportunity to be creative in very diverse ways is not a solution to suffering, but a way of easing it in a way that benefits both the individuals themselves, and the communities in which they live.

I embrace the value of life as a tribute to the great majority of human beings who refuse to take the exit door. The value of life, combined with the uniqueness of each human being who has ever lived and will ever live, are the moral and instrumental foundations not only for the celebration of life in general but also, the value of each individual life.

It justifies the respect each human being deserves. It highlights the opportunity each human being provides for human flourishing if given autonomy, grounded in freedom and liberty. In this uniqueness, resides the potential of each human being to contribute to human flourishing in unimaginable ways. And it provides each human being with the ultimate reason for celebrating her/his life – embracing and celebrating life in its fullness and on its own terms.

What follows is a meditation on the human condition at both a personal and social level. It is not original. It presents a personal distillation of some of the knowledge and wisdom passed on through the ages to assist with authentic living as a way of easing suffering. It is not prescriptive; it does not appeal to a higher authority for action or support. Nor does it preach to individuals or communities on how to live their lives. It is rather an assertion of inevitability about the evolution of life in general, and social life in particular, based on a conjecture on human nature.

Human nature is integral to nature at large and subject to all its natural laws. It is emergent. And the human mind, the distinctive gift human beings are endowed with and the source of all human creativity, also serves as the mind of nature. It has evolved to serve a purpose – to help nature be aware of itself and to understand itself. To that end, to keep serving its purpose, it strives to preserve itself.

If nourished with freedom and liberty, human beings' endless search for ways of surviving and thriving, using their collective minds, will establish order in social life. The purpose of this book is to explain the foundations of this optimistic conjecture.

Girol Karacaoglu
April 2026

girolkaracaoglu@gmail.com
+64 27 565 0613

Introduction

The value of life, human as well as non-human life, underpins the distinction between *good* and *evil*. Any action, personal or social, that promotes life and human flourishing is deemed to be *good*; anything that goes against it, causing suffering, is considered *evil*. This is simply a reflection of the instinctive drive of all creatures to go on living and thriving.

The protection of everyone's freedom to live the life they value so long as they show the same respect to all others, currently living or yet to be born, is promoted on both *moral* and *instrumental* grounds in this book. Hence the embrace of diversity and autonomy as founding principles.

I am imagining a world in which evil is an 'error', and the embrace of diversity, universality, freedom, and liberty serve as 'error correction' mechanisms in the service of human survival and flourishing. They provide the conditions for peaceful and creative interactions within and across communities. This in turn creates shared opportunities for creating meaning through imagination, creativity, and explanatory knowledge, thus reducing suffering. In that very sense, any action that frustrates the operation of this error correction mechanism is evil – it contributes to prolonged suffering.

Process, *connectivity*, and *emergence* provide the central themes for the book. It has been suggested that goodness and beauty serve as 'attractors' for emergent natural processes. The same also holds for emergent (as distinct from constructed) social processes, driven by the force of human nature (*conatus*[1]) - a shared desire to survive, feel safe, and flourish. The nutrients for such emergence are freedom and (in a social setting) liberty.

Part I is on the *unity of nature*, and life as a relational process in pursuit of survival, which defines the shared problem of all creatures. Interconnectedness and emergence are integral to all natural processes, including life. All life is an endless process of problem solving, through the creation, preservation, transmission, and use of knowledge.

Part II is on *human life* and the *human condition*. Human life is an integral part of the larger life process. It is embedded in the natural world. It introduces two additional dimensions to problem solving – the need for safety and security, and the desire to flourish. The constant struggle to survive, keep safe, and flourish defines the human condition.

Part III is on the *human mind, consciousness, and awareness*. The introduction of human beings into nature, into the universe, has added a distinct force to physical and natural forces such as gravity and evolution - force of

the mind. Human beings are an integral part of nature; the human mind serves as the mind of nature as well, helping it be aware of itself and understand itself. Through the mind, human beings become aware of their existence (and so does nature) – I am conscious, therefore I am. The mind's creative capacities serve the pursuit of sustaining life in general as well as human flourishing.

Part IV is on *explanatory knowledge* and *understanding*. Following awareness, the human mind wants to *understand*. The human mind has evolved to help nature understand itself. The mind creates a distinctive form of knowledge to assist in understanding as an integral part of problem-solving - *explanatory knowledge*. Once the human mind understands a process, it proceeds to explore ways of controlling it to serve the purpose of sustaining life, and human survival and flourishing.

Part V is on *suffering;* a distinct attribute added to existence by the consciousness of the human mind. Suffering is intrinsic to the human condition. It reflects the frustration we feel about the absurdity of life, and a necessary condition for our rebellion against it through a deliberate search for meaning through authentic living, through our creativity. Suffering is one of those distinctly human conditions that cannot be addressed by explanatory knowledge alone; it is not a 'problem' that can be 'solved'. Addressing suffering, trying to ease it, requires a change of mindset – away from control,

which is the natural temptation that follows the acquisition of explanatory knowledge, towards enablement and support.

Part VI is on the *unity of the mind.* Explanatory knowledge is one, a critical one, but not the only output the human mind produces through its multi-faceted creative activities. Neither reason alone nor the combination of reason with empirical observation, extracted and analyzed through the application of scientific methods, suffice to improve the human condition. The human mind embodies the fusion between *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism*. It is a home for reason (a point of emphasis for the *Enlightenment*), as well as passion, spirituality, and creativity (a point of emphasis for *Romanticism*).

Part VII is on *community life* as an emergent process. Human life is mostly lived in social settings and is embedded in natural life at large. Creative activities, including the search for meaning towards flourishing, take place in social settings through interaction and collaboration with other human beings; they are relational processes. Coalescing around a set of core values, as a foundation for social cohesion, provides a hopeful platform for sustained human flourishing.

Part VIII is on *freedom* and *liberty*. To fully explore, enjoy, and benefit from its unity with nature, as well as with other human beings, and to flourish, that is, actualize its

essence and reason for being, humankind needs freedom and liberty to apply its distinctive gift of mind toward understanding and creativity. Liberty provides the platform for collaboration of human minds to assist in the emergence of the universal mind.

Part IX is on *universality* and *resilience* as platforms for sustained and shared flourishing – individual as well as community flourishing. Sustained creativity in a communal, social, context requires universal access to advantage – a source of both individual and community resilience. This, coupled with liberty, also offers our greatest protection against extremism and evil.

Part X is on *communalism* as emergent community life, propelled by the force of *conatus*. It explores the conditions supporting the emergence and endurance of diverse communities that are cooperative, egalitarian, creative, free – and living in harmony with nature.

Part XI is on *optimism*. Freedom and liberty, and the embrace of diversity provides the foundations for the emergence of social orders that will sustain human creativity. My optimism is conditional on human vigilance in the protection of *freedom* and the embrace of *diversity.*

Part XII is on *closing the circle*. We have come full circle. Starting with suffering and despair, ending with optimism – all grounded in human nature.

Throughout, I use extensive quotations to transmit directly the voices of those whose wisdom and knowledge this book collates and distils. That is my way of ensuring that these diverse creative voices are heard in a way that captures the passion with which they were expressed.

I. Unity of nature: life, relational processes, and emergence with purpose

Natural order is revealed as the unity of all living species and their harmony with the broader natural world. This includes human beings.

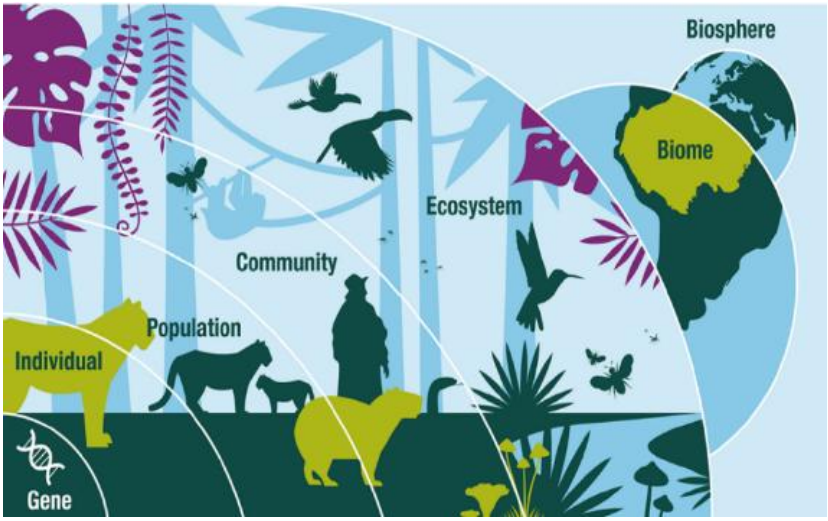

Figure 1: Biosphere and Biodiversity (Dasgupta, 2021, p. 52)

All living beings are interconnected. Diversity, interconnectedness, and harmony provide a strong foundation for resilience, which is inherent and integral to natural order. Self-regulation, self-organization, and mutual support, not domination, are the guiding principles of that order.

Life as a relational process

The purpose of life is *life* – to keep on living. To that end, life, human as well as non-human life, is a relational process. The force behind that process is *conatus*[2] – the force in every animate creature toward the preservation of its existence. *Potentia* (or the power of existing) reflects the capacity and ability of all substances to pursue *conatus*.

According to Rupert Sheldrake (2020):

> *Genes are not individualistic and selfish, despite the rhetoric suggesting they are. As parts of larger wholes, they work cooperatively in the development and functioning of organisms. If they have any moral message for humans, it is that life depends on working together and not on ruthless competition*.[3]

Here is how the neurologist Grey Walter describes the workings of the brain, another component of the 'natural order':

> *We find no boss in the brain, no oligarchic ganglion, or glandular Big Brother. Within our heads our very lives depend on equality of opportunity, on specialization with versatility, on free communication and just restraint, a freedom without interference. Here too, local minorities can and do control their own means of production and expression in free and equal intercourse with their neighbours*.[4]

In that same spirit, Merlin Sheldrake (2020) tells the wonderful story of how fungi, plants, bacteria, and trees are connected via 'wood wide webs' in support of each other:

> *From these roots, a fungal network laced out into the soil and around the roots of nearby trees. Without this fungal web my tree would not exist. Without similar fungal webs no plant would exist anywhere. All life on land, including my own, depended on these networks.*[5]

Similar threads of wisdom about unity, connectedness, and interdependence can also be found in ancient or classical Chinese thought:

> *We commonly hold a dualistic worldview: God versus humanity, matter versus energy, mind versus body—we think of these as separate things. But the Inward Training [an anonymous collection of verses from the fourth century BC] holds a monistic worldview, teaching that every single element in the world and in human beings is composed of the same thing: qi. Everything, whether it is mind, body, matter, or spirit, whether it is earth, people, animals, or air, is composed of this very same substance.*[6]

Living creatures and organisms are embedded in nature, subject to all natural laws. The pursuit of *conatus* is an integral part of the natural laws that define our universe. Just as physical laws describe the motions of the natural world, biological laws describe the evolution of the animate world, which is, of course, part of nature.

Alfred Whitehead (1928, 1932) too emphasized process or continuous motion at the heart of natural relationships—a creative evolutionary process that is indeterministic but purposeful. Again, the emphasis is on relatedness and interconnectedness.

Whitehead, like Henri Bergson (1911) and Jan Smuts (1926), places nature's spontaneous, creative, and purposeful processes and their interconnectedness at the center of his cosmology. Nothing exists in and by itself but in a relationship with everything else. The universal purpose that drives this emergent evolutionary process is *conatus*—the desire to survive, informed and guided by knowledge.

Whitehead's philosophy is described as 'process-relational'; it holds that the world is not made of substances but of processes and relationships. The 'thing' we happen to designate a 'flower,' for example, is an abstraction from a process occurring over time—seed becoming seedling, seedling becoming flower, flower becoming compost, compost becoming soil, *ad infinitum*.

This beginning-less, endless process occurs within a web of mutually unfolding relationships with other processes, solar, meteorological, geological, ecological, and atmospheric. The flower's existence is an instance of an unfolding process and relationship. The same is true of everything without exception, from the smallest elementary particle to the largest.

Zhuangzi, a Chinese philosopher from the late fourth century BCE, said:

> *Everything in the world transforms into everything else in a constant and ceaseless dance of movement and relationships, flux, and shifts. This process of change and movement is happening at every moment.*
>
> *Grass grows, and when it dies, it decomposes, and its qi is channeled into other things. Worms and bugs in the grass are eaten by birds, which in turn are eaten by larger birds or animals. Those larger beasts, too, die over time, decay, become part of the earth. And transform into soil, grass, and other elements. Everything slowly becomes everything else in a cycle of endless change and transformation.*[7]

This conceptualization of natural processes is similar to that proposed by Eihei Dōgen (1200–53 CE), a 13th-century Japanese Zen monk. In Dōgen's universe, all things are in a constant process of change, deriving their being from their interrelationship with everything else. All things are interdependent at all levels of organization. As with the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination or arising, all phenomena occur in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. The universe provides an integrated, benevolent, purpose-laden home for all living organisms, including human beings.

Emergence with purpose, but without destination

Whitehead goes further, embodying the universe with an Aristotelian 'telos,' a general direction for the course of its unfolding evolution, towards greater freedom, complexity, creativity, and mutuality. He imagines a universe that is not morally or aesthetically neutral but naturally inclined in the direction of goodness and beauty—which serve as 'attractors.'

> *An organic community of interrelated drops of experience somehow managing to hang together as a whole, not by necessity, right, or divine fiat, but because of the persuasive allure and attraction of beauty, freely calling all creatures towards harmony and order.*[8]

Strongly similar threads dominate the writings and teachings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1955), Frank Kipler (1994), and David Deutsch (1996, 2011). The uniting theme being the universe evolving towards an 'omega point', representing not an end point but rather 'the beginning of infinity', created by a universal mind - a convergence and unification of universal consciousness and explanatory knowledge based on the creative power of human minds.

The proposition that the evolutionary process is creative and purposeful does not suggest, let alone imply, that its destination is deterministic and predictable, not at all in fact. An evolutionary process can have a purpose (a rationale) without there being an overall plan or plot.

All living organisms and nature, providing a home for them, evolve purposefully but with a destination unknown. There is no predetermined, independent destination that is out there waiting to be discovered or reached, nor is there a predetermined path to be followed. The 'destination' itself is evolving in response to the creative evolutionary process of nature and all the living organisms that are an integral part of it.

As Sir Paul Nurse (2020) explains, one of the five great ideas of biology characterizing living things is that all life evolves by natural selection. An obvious purpose for this evolutionary process is *conatus*—the instinctive struggle of all living organisms to survive and thrive. Dawkins (2016) notes that genes are units selected in the natural selection process, acting as replicators, with various organisms serving as carrying vehicles.

This is a way of living things acquiring purpose and excellent adaptation to their environment without pre-design—evolution by natural selection delivers purpose without design. Carlo Rovelli (2020) has the same idea, "There is no such thing as intentionality in nature. It isn't design that directs the combination of things, but it is the combination of things that gives rise to intentionality."

The future does not exist yet in Alfred Whitehead's view. Unlike deterministic philosophies that decree the

future as a foregone conclusion, given the constellation of causes set in motion at the dawn of original creation, Whitehead's future remains unwritten. Reality is always in the making, not something to be discovered and analyzed. Processes draw on past experiences and their experience of current influences but use them to generate the next moment creatively.

What we are referring to here are emergent processes. Emergence (strong emergence)[9] is the idea that as systems become more complex, they display novel properties that could not have been predicted from their simpler components.

Consider insect colonies. Individual insects go about their business without any intention of serving a higher purpose in the colony or comprehending their role within it. Nevertheless, the aggregate sum of their actions creates an emergent hive society. In a similar vein, Mansoori (2025, p. 2) refers to emergent properties as "qualities that arise from the interactions and relationships between the parts, not from the parts themselves".

Biological organisms follow evolutionary processes—enriched and informed by error correction mechanisms embedded in them. These processes serve a purpose (*conatus*) but do not follow a predetermined path, nor do they have a predetermined direction or destination.
They have emergent, not resultant, properties. They are not reductive; they are layered. Their future depends on

the properties of the most recent layer, not its constituent components. They learn and adapt as integral parts of their environments. They store knowledge in various forms (such as DNA and genes) and pass it on to future generations through organisms.

Complex adaptive systems are learning systems. They evolve through the creation and application of knowledge. They reflect the world around them, carry information within them, and internalize this information, adapting to it. They have purpose. The units of analysis comprising such systems are organisms—physical, biological, social. They interact within and across their domains of life, following their own processes.

George Henry Lewes: "The emergent is unlike its components insofar as these are incommensurable, and it cannot be reduced to the sum of their difference."[10] The rules and eventual outcomes of a system can be completely different from the rules of their elements.

We are conceptualizing a complex system, each part of which is connected to other parts, although the whole possesses some features or properties that the components lack—emergent properties. They demonstrate spontaneity. We cannot know the future, which remains an uncreated possibility, but Whitehead believes, as do Teilhard de Chardin and Kipler, among many others, that the universe is 'attracted' toward greater beauty.

II. Human life and the human condition

Human beings, like all creatures, are an integral part of the universe, governed by its universal natural (physical and biological) laws. All aspects of life, natural, personal, social, economic, is a process underpinned by a common force. The force behind the life process is *conatus* – the inherent, instinctive, drive to survive. In that drive, life, including human life, is an endless process of solving the shared problem defined by *conatus*.

As Karl Popper explains, all organisms are constantly, day and night, engaged in problem-solving, so are all those evolutionary sequences of organisms, the phyla, which begin with the most primitive forms and of which the now living organisms are the latest members. The biological process of evolution and the associated struggle to survive presents the history of problem-solving – and our shared problem with all creatures is *conatus*.

We are all interconnected. "We always have been, and always will be, children of the universe."[11]

It follows that human beings cannot adopt an external observer status (an *aesthetic* perspective) on what happens to nature; the health of nature at large is of *existential* importance to humanity. This is the essence of the 'ecological worldview':

> *From an ecological standpoint nature and people are not separate. People are as much part of nature as animals, forests, and mountains. We are all made of the same basic elements. The diversity of life emerges from the unity of life. […] Without an ecological worldview, we humans consider ourselves separate from nature and even superior and above nature. With an ecological worldview we change this attitude. We recognize the unity of human beings with all other living beings. We recognize the intrinsic value of all life, human life as well as other than human life. As we uphold human rights, we also uphold the rights of nature.*[12]

The tool that nature uses to solve problems is knowledge – i.e., useful information in the service of *conatus*. Evolution is a process of problem-solving through the creation and application of knowledge, supported by the ongoing process of error correction. Genes, DNA, and individuals serve as replicators of knowledge, and organisms and institutions serve as carrying vessels.

Conatus defines human nature as well. The primal problem we share with substances at all levels of complexity (including all living creatures) is defined by a desire or will to resist anything that can take their being (their existence) away. The 19th century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1966) described it as the primary force within human beings, more powerful than anything else, our reason, logic, or moral sense— 'the will to life.'

Conatus acquires additional dimensions in a human context, going beyond simply the will to survive. As Karl Popper (1965) puts it, while a human being's strongest instinct is the instinct for survival, the strongest need is the need for security—the wish to be released from fear, from fear of the unknown.[13]

Once achieved, survival and security then provide the platform on which human beings build all the constructs imagined by the human mind to pursue their aspirations and their wish to thrive or flourish, the shared human desire to improve their lives constantly – the search for meaning. In the human context, I define *conatus* with reference to all three attributes. The constant struggle to survive, keep safe, and flourish defines the human condition.

Each human being is unique – every human being who has ever lived and who will ever live, is *unique*. Therein lies the potential each human being offers to contribute to shared human flourishing through their originality and creativity. To harness this potential, we must give individuals the opportunity and capability, autonomy, to contribute to both their own search for meaning in life through creative activities, and to collective human flourishing. This in turn requires the embrace and celebration of diversity, grounded in liberty, as platforms for values alignment and social cohesion.

III. Human mind, consciousness, and awareness

The introduction of human beings into nature, into the universe, has added a distinct force to physical and natural forces such as gravity and evolution - force of the mind. Human beings are an integral part of nature; the human mind serves as the mind of nature as well, helping it be aware of itself and understand itself. Through the mind, human beings become aware of their existence (and so does nature) – I am conscious, therefore I am. The mind's creative capacities serve the pursuit of sustaining life in general as well as human flourishing.

Over the course of cosmic history, matter has evolved from simplicity to increasing levels of complexity. Consciousness emerged alongside physical and biological complexity – leading to higher levels of awareness. This culminated in the emergence of human consciousness – the universe becoming self-aware through human minds.

Evolution is not just a biological process – the slow unfolding of species and ecosystems – but the very movement of the cosmos towards greater complexity, awareness, and unity. Evolution is purposeful; it has an arrow pointing towards increasing consciousness, integration, and unity - principle of complexity-consciousness.

The human mind emerges through this evolutionary process, with a purpose. To create consciousness, and through consciousness awareness, and then through awareness a curiosity – the urge to understand both ourselves and natural processes. Through the human mind we give nature awareness. Once nature has awareness it too wants to understand itself – through the mind we can also help nature understand itself.

Human beings are not an accidental byproduct of blind processes but a key turning point in the cosmos, where the universe awakens to be aware of itself in reflective thought through the human mind. The *noosphere* is the living web of shared awareness that binds humanity together, expanding as we communicate, cooperate and create – eventually uniting humanity in a network of consciousness.[14]

If the biosphere is the realm of life encircling the earth, there is another layer the *noosphere* – the sphere of mind and thought that emerges when human consciousness becomes collective. Just as the geosphere gave rise to the biosphere, so too the biosphere has given rise to the *noosphere* through the emergence of intelligence, culture, language, and technology.

Now imagine that this movement has a purpose – a goal towards which all creation is emerging – a final point of cosmic consciousness where the universe awakens fully to itself – the 'omega point'. Consciousness thus becomes the axis of creation and creativity, with the human mind serving as its home.

There lies the nucleus of a planetary, universal mind. The 'omega point' is the culmination of evolution where consciousness converges into perfect unity with the universe. But it is not a single endpoint – it is rather 'the beginning of infinity' – the creation of infinite awareness and knowledge.

Consciousness is fundamental to the cosmos. Evolution is a process whereby matter becomes life, life becomes mind, and, through the human mind, the universe tends towards maximum coherence. The omega point is where multiplicity and individuality are preserved in a harmonious union of consciousness – it is the beginning of infinity. The omega point is the ultimate attractor.

IV. Explanatory knowledge and understanding

The tool that nature uses to solve problems is knowledge. Evolution is a process of problem-solving through the creation and application of knowledge, supported by the ongoing process of error correction.

Knowledge comes in two forms: non-explanatory and explanatory. The former is represented by biological evolution—it has no foresight; it cannot conceive a problem and conjecture a solution. It is sequential, inductive knowledge creation that relies on history. Genes and individuals serve as replicators of knowledge, and organisms and institutions serve as carrying vessels.

Human 'wisdom' mimics biological evolution. It is an accumulation of experiences, beliefs, religious teachings and so on. It has a history; it is inductive, always deriving from some source in the past. It is certainly part of human knowledge, but it does not help with explaining—with understanding.

The mind, which human beings are gifted with, generates an additional, very distinctive type of knowledge, *explanatory knowledge*, to solve problems. This is the type of knowledge that can answer questions such as why and how, thus helping the mind make causal connections, that is, to *understand*.[15]

Explanatory knowledge is useful information - information with causal power. Because the human mind, being an integral part of nature, also serves as the mind of nature, it can cause changes in the universe. True explanatory knowledge consists of 'good explanations' which are hard to vary—meaning they are tightly constrained by logic and evidence.[16] Once embedded in the appropriate physical environment, and finds a medium to apply its usefulness, information can sustain itself.

Just as genes (biological knowledge) are designed to survive and replicate – e.g., the information embedded in the wings of a bird that help it fly, human knowledge (explanatory knowledge) can, when placed in the right environment, ensure its own survival and propagation. And if human minds find an environment in which they can freely be creative in collaboration with each other, they may drive a process that tends towards the infinite expansion of explanatory knowledge.

The 'right environment' includes both physical environments (e.g., a computer capable of running a program) as well as social environments (e.g., a culture that supports the scientific method, criticism, and error correction). Like natural selection, knowledge evolves through a process of conjecture, criticism, and testing.

Explanatory knowledge, through understanding, provides the ultimate source of wealth. A resource of any kind (waterways, minerals, plants, various technological artefacts, institutions, …) is not a real resource that is

a part of wealth unless the mind imagines (generates an idea) about how that resource can potentially be used for increasing human flourishing, followed by the generation of the relevant explanatory knowledge as to why and how that can be achieved, followed by the embodiment of the explanatory knowledge in technological artefacts and institutions that gives effect to the idea.

Wealth is first imagined and then created by the human mind, referring to a certain combination of abstract explanatory knowledge with knowledge embodied in technological artefacts and institutions (Karl Popper's 'World 3' constructs).[17] This combination and its evolution are what innovation refers to. Neil Lee (2024) explores the several ways in which such innovation can be made to benefit everyone rather than a select few.

The mind belongs to nature; it is intrinsic to it. In principle, we have access to all the natural laws through the human mind. Hence, the universality of knowledge; knowledge is all-encompassing. And Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) claim that knowledge of nature is God (i.e., Nature)-given,[18] so physicists must learn calculus, the language God speaks, to communicate with God in exploring the laws of nature.[19] [20]

Indeed, it has been suggested that the human mind has evolved, as an integral part of nature's evolutionary process, to help nature understand itself; this is its distinc-

tive function.[21] That is precisely why Karl Popper's theory of knowledge is coterminous with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution; he offered and articulated a unified philosophy that embraces both the natural and the human worlds.[22]

Nature finds its ultimate source of force in the human mind, the conscious mind, and its generation of explanatory knowledge through creativity, conjecture, and error correction. The fact that the mind has this potentially infinite power is not in question. The question is how fast this knowledge will grow and whether it will be directed to evil or good.

By understanding the laws of nature, the human mind offers the capacity as well as the opportunity to help human beings exploit the laws of nature to their advantage - using explanatory knowledge to improve their lives, to make 'good' decisions. Thus, the capacity to *understand* instinctively leads to the temptation to *control* in the service of *conatus.*

But this temptation is a two-edged sword - a potential for both good and evil deeds. The unique gift that humankind has, the mind, offers us both a window to endless opportunities as well as a potential source of immense suffering, a threat to the flourishing and possibly ongoing existence of all living species. For example, by discovering, understanding, and exploiting the laws of nature, humans can build airplanes and make them fly

and can develop cures for diseases—but they can also discover and deploy the atomic bomb and destroy fellow human beings and other living species as well as their material sources of comfort (their homes, roads, schools)—i.e., make destructive decisions and choices.

The added complication is that not all human actions are guided by 'adequate ideas.' Often, we make decisions based on 'inadequate ideas.' We form opinions based on ideology, dogma, superstition, feelings, emotions, and passions. Thus, although we, as human beings, are gifted with the capacity to make 'good' decisions based on 'adequate ideas,' there is nothing in the natural order to ensure that outcome.

There is nothing in the laws of nature that, in principle, prevents generalized knowledge from being used to cause the extinction of humanity. We are both privileged and burdened by our ability to choose—to decide. The endless struggle between 'good' and 'evil,' which has no predictable outcome, is an integral part of the human condition.

There is a very strong correspondence between Baruch Spinoza's 'adequate' versus 'inadequate' ideas on the one hand and the ancient (2500-year-old) Chinese concepts of *qing* (random responses to events and others through emotions) and *yi* ('better ways of responding'

based on taming the emotions through reason, reflection, and practice), that have been traced back to Confucius and other thinkers in that tradition.[23]

Using our minds, we create our own future. In Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) words, "The future is not what will happen to us but what we will do," which is precisely what Cornelius Castoriadis (1987) argues as well.

The future of life and civilization is unknowable because the knowledge that is going to affect it has yet to be created, and how that knowledge will be used is yet to be decided. Hence, the possible outcomes are not yet known, let alone their probabilities. As Mencius taught some 2500 years ago, we are planning, making decisions, and living our lives not in a stable but in a totally capricious world.[24]

Decisions and choices

Being bound by natural laws does not mean that we cannot make decisions (choices); this relates to the vexing problem of 'free will.' Any pretense of exploring solutions to individual and social problems is naturally based on the assumption that we can make decisions and act on them. Being embedded in nature and, therefore, being subject to natural laws, it is, of course, impossible for human beings to free themselves from the causality that is underpinned by natural laws.

In this specific sense, humans do not, cannot, possess free will in this universe.[25] Scientific and technological progress can help human beings understand natural laws and exploit them to enhance the wellbeing of all living creatures; however, it cannot help humankind break free of natural laws and other external influences that they cannot individually control.

Nevertheless, we continually make decisions or choices that have consequences. We are both gifted and condemned to be free, to make choices—that is our predicament. In making decisions,

> *All we're doing is evaluating what are the best decisions to make given the limited information we have. A decision is the result of our evaluation; it does not require anything beyond the laws of nature. …making decisions does not necessitate free will*.[26]

Decision-making is essentially problem-solving; at the heart of decision-making is the creation of new options. 'Good' decisions or choices are those that enhance our wellbeing on an enduring basis. They are partly based on explanatory knowledge. For example, through reasoning, experimentation, and other sources of knowledge, we understand that consuming nutritious food, rather than processed food, enhances our health on a sustained basis, thereby improving our wellbeing. We can reduce the immediate pain of hunger by eating junk or healthy food; both options would alleviate pain

and increase our pleasure and happiness. Nevertheless, only eating healthy food will, in the long run, reduce suffering and enhance wellbeing on a sustained basis.

All decisions we make at any point in time will be conditioned by a whole series of natural, including biological and inherited, circumstances, as well as human-created social and political institutions, and technological artefacts – Popper's 3rd World constructs. As technological developments progress, our decisions and choices may also be deliberately manipulated by those who hold positions of power and influence through the misuse of technology.[27]

Unlike other physical and natural forces, explanatory knowledge can change, evolve, and expand over time. It also has the power to change the world. In fact, the world we live in is mostly created by the conversion of ideas that the human mind creates into explanatory knowledge followed by the application of this knowledge to generate progress by solving problems.

Explanatory knowledge creation - a creative process

Explanatory knowledge creation involves an elaborate emergent process—an ongoing process of conjecture, criticism, learning, and error correction. The mind creates explanatory knowledge by transforming ideas that

it imagines into information with causal powers—answering questions such as why and how. Knowledge is built on conjectures about viable solutions to the problems we face or choose to focus on, which form the basis of explanations (i.e., theories) that are subjected to scrutiny (i.e., criticism). Scientific theories are explanations not derived from experience but created by our minds for the explicit purpose of problem-solving.[28] They are improved through a process of error correction, which in turn is nourished by criticism.

There are two types of emergences, exemplified by biological evolution on the one hand and the evolution of explanatory knowledge on the other – 'general emergence'. Biological evolutionary processes, just like inductive processes, have emergent properties that are sequential—each step follows the other in some structured (albeit not necessarily predictable) way. Each step has a basis, depending on the previous step (history), which defines the fundamental difference between the two types of knowledge: non-explanatory and explanatory. The latter is created by the human mind through creativity, by imagining the unseen and the inexperienced, not based on history.

The evolution of explanatory knowledge is based on creative conjectures created by the human mind. The underlying process is one of general emergence rather than sequential. It embodies the kind of imaginary conjectures that have no basis or history, founded on neither

previous nor actual experience. There is neither a predestination nor an endpoint. It has infinite possibilities. The future is affected by explanatory knowledge that has not been created yet; that is one reason why the future is unknowable.[29] No explanation has enough reach to predict the content of its own successors, or their effects, or of other ideas that have not even been thought of.[30] We continually problem-solve to serve our purposes of survival, security, and flourishing, partly assisted by deliberately created constructs, including technological artifacts and institutions.

Humans have explanatory creativity. We will eventually overcome viruses because viruses evolve through biological evolution, whereas humans can create explanatory general knowledge based on creative, imaginative conjectures. However, we cannot necessarily beat 'evil'—there is no natural law that guarantees that positive outcome. Suffering is also created by creative knowledge generated by the human mind.

Therefore, optimism about the potential for beating evil must be based on emergent logic. Because 'evil,' which craves control, will not tolerate openness and criticism, whereas 'good' is based on openness and criticism, the latter (i.e., 'good') has a better chance of winning this ongoing battle. I am referring to a tendency—a possible broad direction of evolution favoring the 'good' here as an 'attractor,' based on natural processes reflecting human nature—not predicting a particular outcome.

We may find inspiration in classical Chinese Daoist philosophy, with its emphasis on the concept of the Dao.[31] The Dao, or 'the Way,' "is not a harmonious 'ideal' we must struggle to follow. Rather, *the Way* is the path [of knowledge creation] that we forge continually through our choices, actions and relationships. We create *the Way* anew every moment of our lives. …There was no unified vision of *the Way* with which all [ancient or classical] philosophers would have agreed. …But they agreed that the very process of building it has endless potential to transform us and the world in which we live."[32]

The best approach to life's problems is to open *the Way* to the ongoing, free creation of explanatory knowledge as well as other outputs of human creativity, serving human *conatus*, and keeping it open. *The Way* is an evolving, emergent path, one we shape through our choices and actions—not predefined or discoverable. There is no predetermined path or destination.

V. Suffering and search for meaning

Not every human condition presents a 'problem' to be 'solved' by the application of explanatory knowledge created by the human mind. Suffering, which motivates the search for meaning in life, is one of those distinctly human conditions. Addressing suffering, trying to ease it, requires a change of mindset – away from control, which is the natural temptation that follows the acquisition of explanatory knowledge, towards enablement and support.

Suffering and despair are intrinsic to the human condition. Suffering is associated with numerous sources of despair - poverty, exclusion, deprivation, loss, love, incurable pain, illness, and incapacity. Authentic living represents a rebellion against suffering in the form of a deliberate search for meaning despite everything that life throws at us, ultimately ending in death.

Suffering serves as the driving force behind, a necessary condition for human creativity. We rebel against the absurdity of life through our search for meaning in a meaningless universe by choosing authentic living, by being creative. Without suffering, there would be no drive for creative and authentic living. Indeed, all creative endeavors are a rebellion against suffering.

Suffering and flourishing are two sides of the coin of life. By-products of the distinctly human dimension of *conatus*, the aspiration to flourish, which is the source of all creativity. The universe is a participant in our journey. Evolution does involve extinction and suffering, but these are part of the process of convergence – strife and love woven together in the birth of something greater.

Humanity is not a collection of isolated individuals but a single body of consciousness. To recognize this is to live with a sense of moral responsibility, knowing that our thoughts, choices, and actions are part of the cosmic unfolding towards omega. Our decisions shape our opportunities and our options. They affect the outcomes that are possible. By promoting 'good' we are trying to increase the weight of the branches of the tree of life that carry healthy 'fruits' – i.e. the probability of 'good' outcomes. By reducing harm, suffering, and evil we are changing the relative weights of emergent evil and good outcomes.

Other people's suffering makes both a moral and instrumental claim on us. We do not have a moral obligation to increase other people's happiness, but we do have a moral obligation to reduce other people's suffering, thus reducing the weight of evil in our overall existence. And if we do so by increasing the opportunities for creative and authentic living for the benefit of individuals as well as their communities, then we are not only responding to a moral imperative but in doing so we are also serving our individual and community interests in pursuit of sustained flourishing.

Addressing suffering

Suffering is not a 'problem' to be 'solved' – a disease to be 'cured' through external medical intervention. Knowledge alone, including explanatory knowledge, is not adequate to deal with suffering. Suffering is a condition to be healed by introspection, creativity, personal development, using all the faculties that the mind offers, not just reasoning. It requires support for the person who is suffering through freedom, autonomy, opportunities, and enablement so that she can deal with her own suffering in her own way, as she searches for meaning in her life.

Explanatory knowledge is critical in our attempts to understand the external world. Consciousness opens the way to introspection, to understanding ourselves, our internal world. For that we need to consider, cultivate, enable the broader faculties that the mind offers, and ensure as best we can that the enablers for these faculties to operate well are broadly shared. We can help by giving everyone the opportunities to search for meaning in their lives in their own ways.

As Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) explains, the conviction, dating back to the eighteenth century and the *Enlightenment*, that the growth of human intelligence, i.e., reason, will address human suffering, end social injustice and solve social problems has not materialized—and is most unlikely to materialize. We need something more.

Complementing the scientific approach to problem-solving, founded on *Enlightenment*, which has provided and continues to provide a partial path towards *conatus*, must be an appreciation that explanatory knowledge can provide only half the solution. While necessary and critical, problem-solving is not sufficient to serve flourishing on its own, as a path to address suffering.

Indeed, I conjecture that the exclusive focus on understanding in the scientific sense, in attempts to improve human life, has been a significant contributor to our failure to succeed. Understanding based on science, if successful, leads to the temptation to control—to exploit and manipulate what we understand, such as natural laws, to serve our human purposes. Undoubtedly, it has made enormous contributions to enhancing human wellbeing by improving our material comforts, safety, and security. However, the illusion that we can fully understand human and social life and, therefore, control it, as well as the temptation to pursue this illusion, has also been the source of endless suffering.

Conatus has a third critical dimension—flourishing. We need to complement explanatory knowledge, understanding and control, with enabling and liberating to provide fertile ground for flourishing—to let life and the creative mind flow freely. We need to complement, not replace, understanding with comprehension—acceptance and appreciation of the complexities of life in all its forms, including social human life.

In this context, we are not seeking 'solutions' to 'control-problems'; we are exploring approaches to purposefully construct or encourage the emergence of political and social orders that support liberty, creating opportunities for human flourishing.[33]

Romanticism has taught us that most of life's problems cannot be solved—although some of them certainly can. Life is a ceaseless becoming, a flow, with no pattern out there to be discovered and understood; we create the life we live as we live it. We need a fresh, broader definition of a problem (or rather, an opportunity) based on a different mindset, one focused on open-ended and creative approaches that can be imagined through the collaboration of human minds. These are complementary, not competing, approaches. Problem-solving, which involves understanding, needs to be complemented with comprehension—an appreciation of spontaneity in the service of *conatus*. Both are nourished by creativity (founded on reason, imagination, and consciousness) and freedom.

The missing piece and a critical question

What we have outlined above are the foundations, i.e., the necessary conditions for surviving as well as improving individual and collective flourishing on a sustained basis – for authentic living.

As Maria Abreu *et al*.[34] (2022) emphasize, one of those key ingredients of success is 'conversion factors'—both the ability and the will (or desire) of individuals to convert these necessary conditions (the enablers) to flourishing outcomes when they are endowed with the freedoms (and the agency) and resources to do so. Indeed, "the key idea behind the capabilities approach is that individuals differ in their ability to transform resources into well-being or 'flourishing.'"[35]

Individuals may lack the ability or the desire or will to convert these conditions into the lives they desire to pursue, whatever form these lives may take. The role of good government is to provide individuals and communities with the capabilities and opportunities (the capacity and autonomy) to live fulfilling lives through effective access to enablers and basic services. It would be internally inconsistent, however, for a social order that is founded on freedom to enforce presumed wellbeing outcomes on individuals.

How would we know what lives individuals wish to pursue, what ultimate outcomes will give value to their lives, what right do we have to second-guess such outcomes? In the spirit of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (1918) *Notes from the Underground*, who are we to judge whether human acts are 'rational' or 'irrational' as we define these attributes, or to limit human beings' urges and rights to enjoy risky lives if they choose to do so.

All we can do is to ensure, as best we can, that individuals and the communities to which they belong have the opportunities (including resources), capabilities, and freedoms to pursue the lives they value, to live well (to live fulfilling lives) as they choose, and to support those who cannot look after themselves.

Having been presented with that opportunity, if an individual or community decides to follow another path (that of belief or escape) that is perfectly fine. Every individual and community should have the freedom to choose the life they wish to live.

VI. Unity of the mind

Explanatory knowledge is one, a critical one, but not the only one of the outputs produced by the human mind in its multi-faceted creative activities, in support of human beings' rebellion against suffering by deliberately searching for meaning through authentic living.

Neither reason alone nor the combination of reason with empirical observation, extracted and analyzed through the application of scientific methods, would suffice to discover the laws of nature – let alone ease suffering.[36] As William Blake put it, "May God keep us from single vision and Newton's sleep." [37] Single vision can be through a narrow perception of science, a fundamentalist religious perspective of the world or through ideology and dogma.

The human mind contributes imagination and creativity, to problem-solving, including the pursuit of flourishing. The creation of explanatory knowledge makes use of all these attributes of the human mind.

Imagining the unseen, creating new options that are not based on history, and applying the method of conjecture are critical ingredients of problem-solving. And this is how *consciousness* enters the scene as an additional dimension of human experience offered through the gist of the mind.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines 'consciousness' as "the evolutionary development that allows men and women to organize their own previous experiences and then imagine alternatives to existing reality, thereby making it possible to initiate changes relying on the agency of consciousness itself, independent of external conditions".[38]

Reason, imagination, and consciousness, jointly and through their distinctive contributions to creativity, are what allow us to make the most of causality (i.e., to understand)—to make sense of the laws of nature and use them to our advantage, should we choose to.

Indeed, *Romanticism*, which Isaiah Berlin (1999) describes as one of the greatest turning points in Western thought, is considered an anti-*Enlightenment* intellectual movement precisely because it acknowledges and stresses these broader dimensions of the human mind and life. It celebrates the crucial role of individual creativity (including the creation of new values and visions) and that of human imagination. It also serves as a critique for reducing people to calculating machines.[39]

I suggest that a potential answer to the challenge of suffering can be found in the fusion of two traditions in human thoughts that date back thousands of years and have found its most recent expression in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries, the *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism*.

The story of these two threads of thought is beautifully narrated but presented as a clash of two traditions by Isaiah Berlin[40] in many works. I embrace them as complementary, rather than clashing, traditions that jointly offer a fresh approach to improving human life by serving *conatus* in its entirety.

The human mind embodies the fusion I imagine between the *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism*. The mind is a home for reason (a point of emphasis for the *Enlightenment*), as well as passion, spirituality, and creativity (a point of emphasis for *Romanticism*). The former is a search for common methods of inquiry, such as the scientific method, that seek causal connections as a source of understanding and control. The latter appreciates and celebrates individuality and creativity, aiming to liberate, and empower.

The big idea, the crucial idea, is that these distinctive attributes of the mind are inseparable—they function in total unity. As David Deutsch (2011) acknowledges and emphasizes, the human mind needs both in the creation of explanatory knowledge as well.

The human mind not only serves as a home for reason and consciousness, but it does so in a fully integrated, holistic way. "Man has no body distinct from his soul, for body is that portion of the soul discerned by the five senses".[41] Human beings pursue *conatus* by using their reason, their consciousness, and their soul in a balanced

way. Our passions and spirituality, our sense of empathy, and our *xin* are also instrumental in our interactions with the natural world, as well as with others in social settings.

We can thus imagine two levels of unity associated with the human mind. The unity of reason and consciousness within human minds defines our uniqueness as individual human beings, and the unity of the capacity to reason across humanity provides a shared platform for communication, cooperation, inquiry, and co-creation. The latter is the 'logos' of Heraclitus (around 500 BCE) and Aristotle (around 370 BCE), the vehicle for reasoned discourse, the intelligible ordering principle that is common to all humanity, providing a bridge across human minds assisted by language as Chomsky (2023) explains it.

Numerous scholars have tried to make a clear distinction between the rational and emotional faculties, separating the mind and the heart as much as possible.

> *In Chinese, the word for mind and heart is actually one and the same: xin. The heart-mind is the seat of our emotions as well as the center of our rationality. It can deliberate, ponder, contemplate, and feel love, joy, and hatred. …Good decisions are made when mind and heart are integrated.*[42]

Conscious experiences were a central theme of Alfred Whitehead's metaphysics as well. He believed that these conscious experiences have causal efficacy, helping us make meaningful decisions in the world. Whitehead wanted a metaphysics that found a place for consciousness and choice within the very heart of reality.[43]

VII. Community life as an emergent process

Human life is lived in social settings and is embedded in natural life at large. As Laozi (551–479 BCE.) put it 2500 years ago, ultimately, society is defined by a group of people who, on the grounds of both self-interest and morality, show concern for the welfare of their fellow human beings. Shared problems and interests functionally define a community (or society).

Knowledge creation, and creative processes more generally, are an integral part of the life process, and they take place in social settings through interaction and collaboration with other human beings—it is a relational process. As part of the life process, suffering and flourishing are also social and communal processes – the social context in which lives are lived provide enablers for or impediments to flourishing. *Social cohesion* is a particularly critical enabler of sustained flourishing.

Value creation, just like knowledge creation, is a creative process that takes place in a social setting.

> *For romanticism, value creation [same with knowledge creation] is an eternal process of unceasing creation, and if it's unceasing creation, then any attempt to arrest it by saying 'This is the right order'—the communist order or the capitalist order or the clerical order, or this order or that order—is death. How can you represent the forces of life by death?*

> *That's to say, how can you represent movement by rest? How can you represent the eternal movement of the human spirit by spick and span categories, by something which is fixed? A finished work of art is from last year's calendar. It's over. The process is everything. The creative process can't be described because it's in constant flux. You can have glimpses of it, you can have intimations of it, you can have symbols which stand for it. The whole of the universe is a kind of creative self which can be conveyed only on the run. It's in constant flight. You can't capture the flight. You can't photograph it: you can do it only by equally moving images. But images can't move.*[44]

Creativity is all about improving ideas. It is nourished and oiled by freedom and diversity. Disobedience and non-conformity in the creation of knowledge is most welcome. That is why it is so critical to have an open society, a culture, and a tradition that welcomes criticism and embraces diversity—and institutions that embody these traits.

Under 'general Darwinism,' organisms include social organisms and, indeed, any process that combines the three ingredients of variation, selection, and replication (VSR). Genes are critically important, but as integral components of an incredibly complex system within the whole organism, they receive environmental, social, and cultural inputs throughout development and evolution.

Social life is organized complexity. Complex systems reflect the world around them, carry information inside them, and internalize the information gathered through the creation of explanatory knowledge. Human beings deliberately create institutions to perform all these functions.[45] Institutions are humanly created learning, storing, and transmitting structures for generalized explanatory knowledge. Their roles correspond to those of organisms in the natural world, the carriers of knowledge stored in DNA and genes. Institutions also assist with error correction, democracy being one of these error correction institutions.

Fig. 1 refers to community. Human life is mostly lived in communities of varying sizes and attributes. For the human mind to function to its full potential, a variety of human needs must be satisfied in social settings. Fig. 3 represents Abraham Maslow's (1943) conceptualization of these human needs as a 'hierarchy of needs'. It can be thought of as an elaboration of *conatus*.

It presents the pre-conditions for survival, safety and security, and flourishing. In addition to the basic physiological needs of food, water, shelter, and warmth, the figure also acknowledges the distinctive human needs of safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. In a social setting, social order provides a critical platform for safety and security – both a source and a consequence of social cohesion, and shared values provide a necessary precondition for enduring social order.

Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Highgate Counselling Centre, http://highgatecounselling.org.uk/members/certificate/CT2%20Paper%201.pdf

The highest level in the proposed hierarchy (self-actualization) refers to activities that unlock the unique character and contribution inherent in each person that can best be developed if the other more basic needs are securely in place. These, collectively, provide the necessary conditions for humans' ability to pursue and live the lives they value – to deliberately search for meaning.

Everything individuals and communities do, including the institutions and other political and social structures they create, must be aligned with *conatus*. A social order that does not satisfy all three dimensions of the problem of human life, namely, survival, security, and flourishing, cannot provide a platform for sustained flourishing.[46]

One of the persistent problems that humanity has strived to find solutions for is the establishment and maintenance of social orders that are aligned with *conatus*. There is no evidence of success so far. We know what such a social and political order could look like, but we do not know how to bring it about universally and on an enduring basis.

There is absolutely no doubt that since the *Enlightenment*, which provided the philosophical foundation for the scientific approach advocated by Karl Popper and many others, through the liberation of explanatory knowledge, the challenge it posed for authority, and its embodiment in human-devised technological artefacts and social institutions, the material comforts (prosperity) of humanity, both rich and poor, have improved dramatically. However, so far, this has not translated into universal access to sources of advantage,[47] peaceful coexistence, or social cohesion.

In a social context, explanatory knowledge in the scientific sense may not be that helpful. Indeed, understanding as a platform for controlling is neither suitable nor appropriate in enabling and supporting human flourishing—certainly not in social settings. Nor is 'solution' the right term for what we are after. We need to complement understanding with comprehension—an appreciation of the vast complexities of social life.

In a social setting, to serve *conatus*, we need to accommodate and enable remarkably different, diverse lives to be lived in peace (social cohesion), as well as in harmony with nature. We need social conditions that support the sustained creation of explanatory knowledge generated through inclusive creativity, which benefits everyone while embracing diversity and celebrating diverse ways of living (plurality). The aim is to keep *the Way* open for everyone to travel on so that it can be extended and expanded. Here again, the criticality of both liberty and social cohesion is self-evident.

Challenges of human nature in social settings

Integral to the social context are two distinct dimensions of social life—life within communities of different compositions and sizes, and interactions between groups ranging all the way to international relations. It is human nature, as manifested by human behavior in social settings, that provides a distinctive challenge of increasing complexity in our pursuit of sustained flourishing.

Social life exposes and highlights further attributes of human nature, empathy, morality, and Friedrich Nietzsche's (1901) *The Will to Power*—the proposition that increasing one's power to maintain and enhance one's existence is the prime directive of all beings. "Every group, as every individual, has expansive desires which are rooted in the instinct of survival and soon extend beyond it. The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power."[48]

Diminishing mutuality between individual and group (or social) *conatus*, as the sizes and diversity of communities and/or distances between national and international groups increase, generates the need to explore additional, complementary approaches to addressing the wellbeing problem. The primary purpose of these explorations is to reduce the attractiveness of the use of power and force as solutions, which is inversely proportional to mutuality, and strengthen the appeal of reason- and morality-based solutions—trying to preserve a balance between the forces of individual and social *conatus*, when they tend to diverge. A very thoughtful and thorough exploration of these tensions and associated challenges is provided by Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*:

> *For all the centuries of experience, men have not yet learned how to live together without compounding their vices and covering each other 'with mud and blood'. The society in which each man lives is at once the basis for, and the nemesis of, that fullness of life which each man seeks. However much human ingenuity may increase the treasures which nature provides for the satisfaction of human needs, they can never be sufficient to satisfy all human wants; for man, unlike other creatures, is gifted and cursed with an imagination which extends his appetites beyond the requirements of human subsistence. Human society will never escape the problem of the equitable distribution of the physical and cultural goods which provide for the preservation and fulfillment of human life.*[49]

Laws of natural order are out there waiting to be discovered using the human mind. Social order, especially if it is to be founded on unity in diversity, will have to emerge somehow or be constructed and thereafter constantly maintained. Social unity does not exist in advance of such composition. Nor will it be based purely on reason and rationality. We must find our way (the Dao, *The Way*). A social order that promises sustained flourishing will have to accommodate and embrace emotions, passions, and spirituality in all their diversity, as well as reason and consciousness – it will have to emerge, it cannot be imposed.

The critical role of communities

Human flourishing is strongly dependent on the social dimension of human life.[50] As John Helliwell (2019) reports, social sources of wellbeing, especially those delivered in person, are of even greater importance for wellbeing than previously thought.[51]

In recent *World Happiness Reports,* six factors have been found to explain three quarters of the differences in average life evaluations among countries and over time: GDP (i.e., income) per capita; healthy life expectancy; and an additional four that can be described as social factors (having someone to count on in times of trouble; a sense of freedom to make life choices; generosity; and trustworthy environment, as proxied by the absence of corruption in business and government).

The largest gains come from the measure of social support. Within 'social', the dominance of the local is of first-order importance - an atmosphere of mutual support and trust. This goes beyond being free from the risk of attack by others, with remedies promised by the gated community. It is the capacity to feel embedded in a community where trust, belonging, and mutual support are the accepted norms.

Wise governance actively creates the 'spaces' underpinned by a suite of freedoms (of thought, of association, of faith) for the nourishment of social cohesion—and as a platform for social order. Both Robert Putnam (1994, 2020) and Jürgen Habermas[52] understood the 'primacy of the public sphere' as a platform for good and wise governance—a parliament can only be as strong as the coffeehouse beside it.[53]

> *[The] real importance and value of [Putnam's] work lie in his studies of what makes democracies happen – the most famous being his examination of the decentralized ('devolved') government in Italy. He spent years studying what happened when the powerful central government of Italy in Rome democratized itself and offered local power.*[54]

Michael Sandel (2022) too traces the sources of 'democracy's discontent' in more recent times to anxieties about the loss of self-governance, loss of community bonds, and the gradual loss of effective political voice and influence in decisions affecting our lives.

In Part X, in discussing and promoting communalism as a political order most supportive of democracy in its fundamental sense, I argue that devolving decision-making powers from the center to communities will not make democracies happen. In a true democracy, devolution flows the other way; communities are at the center, devolving decision-making authority to broader confederations when required to achieve collective outcomes more effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

Strong local, community-based organizations (sports clubs, literary guilds, service groups, NGOs) make all the difference. Wise (liberal humanist) governance is all about deliberately creating the environment, the spaces, for these community institutions to emerge and flourish.

> *The conservative idea of community is a way of preserving tradition; the liberal idea of community is one of assembling confidence and energy for reform. Building social capital, or civic society, is a way of having self-government outside government, not just a way of reaffirming familiar values. On the contrary, the values it affirms are usually rebellious: the possibility of abolition or free thinking or feminism or, in the social capital of the black church, equal rights*.[55]

Colin Ward (2004) offers a crucial observation about the role of communities in a globalized and connected world:

> *It is often suggested that as a result of modern personal mobility and instant communications, we all live in a series of global villages and that consequently the concept of local control of local services is obsolete. But there is confusion here between the concepts of communities of propinquity and communities of interest. We may share concerns with people on the other side of the world and not even know our neighbors. But the picture is transformed at different stages in our personal or family history when we have shared interests with other users of the local primary school or health center, and the local shop or post office. Here there is, as every parent will confirm, an intense concern with very local issues*.[56]

In other words, although new communication technologies have strengthened the voice and impact of global communities of interest, they need not (and indeed do not) diminish the role and significance of local communities, communities based on place, in our daily lives.

Equally important as a foundation for communities, especially communities of propinquity, is shared values. This is a critical platform for social order and social cohesion. Diversity and plurality will not serve as a source of flourishing unless it is based on a common platform of shared values. One of the key unifying concepts is that of self-identifying communities founded on shared interests and values, increasingly enriched and globally connected with the help of technology.[57]

If our purpose is to improve human lives as people wish to live the very diverse lives they value, then we need to place much emphasis on the health and wellbeing of the communities in which those lives are lived. In this context, determinants of cooperative behavior are most critical. Several studies show a very close link between the level of trust among the members of a community and the degree of cooperative and prosocial behaviors. In turn, individuals living in communities where trust and cooperation are high also experience higher levels of individual well-being.[58]

That is precisely why social cohesion formed on a platform of social capital (bridging social capital, to be more precise)[59] provides such a strong and enduring foundation for liberal humanist governance. Carles Boix and Daniel Posner (1998) define social capital as:

> *The networks, norms of reciprocity and trust that are fostered among the members of the community associations by virtue of their experience of social interaction and cooperation. Mere proximity counts for a lot. Learning to live and work in peace with other people with whom you don't share genes, or a creed, is the foundation of modern freedom. …When social spaces begin to be created outside the direct control of the state (including commercial ones, run for profit), civil society can start to flourish in unexpected ways. Learning just to sip [coffee or tea] alongside a stranger makes for a portable kind of pluralism.*[60]

As a historical example of the interplay between communities, diversity, creativity, and flourishing, consider Europe around 1500, with around 500 city-states, duchies, republics, and nations. The average population of Italian city-states in the late 18th century varied greatly. Some, like the Kingdom of Naples (including Sicily), had populations over 6 million, while others, like the Republic of Lucca, had populations under 100,000. The city of Rome had approximately 140,000 residents, while Milan had about 40,00. As Fareed Zakaria (2007) explains it,

> *This variety had two wondrous effects. First, it allowed for diversity. People, ideas, art, and even technologies that were unwelcome or unnoticed in one area would often thrive in another. Second, diversity fueled constant competition between states, producing innovation and efficiency in political organization, military technology, and economic policy. Successful policies were copied; losing ways were cast aside.*

The economic historian Eric Jones described Europe's spectacular economic and political success as "the European miracle."[61]

Harmony of the social order with the natural order

To provide a fertile environment for sustainable well-being, a social order must be in perfect harmony with the natural order as well - the essence and spirit of the unity of natural and social orders.

This is brilliantly captured by Stefano Mancuso in his *The Nation of Plants*,[62] which issues a radical manifesto represented by a Bill of Rights comprising only eight articles:

- *Article 1*: The Earth shall be the common home of life. Sovereignty shall pertain to every living being.
- *Article 2*: The Nation of Plants shall recognize and protect the inviolable rights of natural communities as societies based on the relationships among the organisms that compose them.
- *Article 3*: The Nation of Plants shall not recognize animal hierarchies, founded on command centers and centralized functions and shall foster diffuse and decentralized vegetable democracies.
- *Article 4*: The Nation of Plants shall universally respect the rights of the currently living and those of future generations.
- *Article 5*: The Nation of Plants shall guarantee the right to clean water, soil, and atmosphere.
- *Article 6*: The consumption of any resource non-reconstitutable for future generations of living beings shall be prohibited.
- *Article 7*: The Nation of Plants shall not have borders. Every living being shall be free to travel, move and live there without limitation.

- *Article 8*: The Nation of Plants shall recognize and foster mutual aid among natural communities of living beings as an instrument of coexistence and progress.

This beautifully crafted Bill of Rights, issued on behalf of plants, stands for a most apt manifesto for the unified community of plants and humans as well. It is also fully aligned with the hope of the Italian priest and geologist Antonio Stoppani (1824–91) that the introduction of human beings into nature will create the opportunity to unify physical and natural principles with intellectual and moral ones.[63]

Social emergence

Unfortunately, the harmonious evolution of the natural world in very creative ways, gently guided and nudged in the direction of greater freedom, creativity, and mutuality, does not naturally translate into human social relations or, indeed, human interactions with the natural world. There is no evidence for the existence of such a good, as distinct from an evil, 'attractor'[64] for the evolution of social order. Moreover, there is nothing in the laws of nature that directs collective human action towards 'good' rather than 'evil' outcomes.

The crises of our era are essentially crises of failures in relatedness, whether with our biosphere or with our neighbors as we tribally-oriented humans—in other

words, all of us—are necessarily confronted with the difficulties of living cheek-to-jowl with strangers-turned-neighbors in the global village.[65]

There is no guarantee that humans will grab the opportunity they have been offered, that is, their minds, passions, and spirituality, and choose wisely. Whether they will or not will determine the fate of humanity, as well as other living species, which are all interconnected. Indeed, about 2500 years ago, Zhuangzi cautioned us against the inherent weakness of our minds. "Zhuangzi referred to the terms *yin* and *yang*, or darkness and light, softness and hardness, weakness, and strength."

The Way, he argued, is a process of constant interactions between these two elements that seem to stand in opposition but complement each other. They must revolve constantly to balance each other. In the winter, *yin*, the cold and dark element, prevails. Then things change, and summer, the season of *yang*, of heat and light, arrives. The constant and inevitable interplay of the energy of *yin* and *yang* does not just create seasonal change but also underpins all the transformations we see throughout the cosmos.

> *There is one exception, Zhuangzi argued, to the teeming, transforming world; just one thing in the entire cosmos that does not spontaneously follow 'the Way'. That thing is us: human beings. […] We actually spend our entire lives battling against flux and transformation: we declare our opinion to be right (and others*

> *indisputably wrong); we work ourselves up over the accomplishments of a rival; we remain stuck in a dead-end job because we're fearful of change. In the process, we disrupt and block the interplay of yin and yang. That is due to our natural endowment: our minds.*[66]

Walter Benjamin's (1940) *Theses on the Philosophy of History* can be read as a critique and rejection of historical materialism, which represents the past as a continuum of progress.[67] Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1918) agrees: "In short, one can say anything about the history of the world—anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing that one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat."

John Dewey,[68] who did not believe in an ideal end state, took the current state of a social organization instead as a given and argued that changes can only be made here and there in a piecemeal fashion as the current situation allows, with small changes aggregating over time, but with no guarantee that history is moving us towards a 'good attractor.'

Cornelius Castoriadis (1987), Noam Chomsky (2023), and David Deutsch (2012) also present complementary viewpoints, all to the same effect. While humankind, too, being an integral part of nature, shares the same *conatus,* there is no guarantee in the laws of nature that the collective outcome of human choices, behavior, actions,

and interactions will guide us toward surviving and thriving.

Explanatory knowledge can create both good and evil ideas and outcomes. Even if we start from the same position, private *conatus* does not convert into social *conatus*—into good social outcomes. It would be wonderful if, in alignment with the natural process of creative evolution, human beings, too, would naturally strive to maximize the good, the true, and the beautiful, helping the socio-ecological system flow in the intended direction of goodness. Unfortunately, there is much evidence to the contrary, despite the human potential for human goodness.

But how about social laws—if not natural laws? The use of reason, creativity, and empathy motivates us to cooperate and collaborate with other human- and non-human beings because it is in our collective interest to do so. There is the instinctive, reason-based recognition of the complementary benefits of collaborating with other members of the whole to assist with one's survival.

Every whole has a dual tendency to preserve and assert its individuality as a quasi-autonomous entity while also functioning as an integrated part of an (existing or evolving) larger whole. This polarity between the self-assertive and integrative tendencies is inherent in the concept of hierarchical order.[69] Why does not all this

naturally (through the lens of *conatus*) lead to the ongoing prosperity and peaceful coexistence of communities across the world? Why does individual rationality not translate (emerge) into collective/social rationality?

Rationality and morality – individuals and groups

As narrated by both Isaiah Berlin (1952) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1932), among many other scholars, the tension and complementarity between human freedom and social harmony have been the focus of political and philosophical discourse throughout the ages. Most famously, it was expressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) in *The Social Contract*: "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains," referring to the constraints imposed on human beings by the structures and expectations of society. Of course, the other side of this coin is the protections and enablers that society provides as a source of human flourishing.

There are three dimensions of this topic I want to highlight. First, it happens that even if we were to assume that individuals are rational beings and that they have high moral standards, it does not follow that these individual characteristics automatically and linearly translate into group rationality and group morality. Second, as the mutuality of interest within and across groups diminishes, there is often a temptation to turn to force and other instruments of power as a substitute for reason-

based negotiations and compromise to address perceived or actual injustices. Third, the deliberate development or gradual emergence of shared values offers a promising platform for tilting the balance towards the use of reason rather than instruments of power as a way of addressing these perceived or actual injustices.

Individual rationality and morality

Rationality broadly covers decisions and choices people make under all sorts of circumstances, which is fully in accord with the argument of this book about human nature. Knowledge grows by conjecture and criticism, followed by error correction. There are no authoritative sources of knowledge; it is always conjectural—nobody can see the causes of events. All evidence is circumstantial.[70] Human actions are aligned with *conatus,* the human instinct, need, and desire to survive, keep safe, and flourish. In this broad sense, human decisions are consistent, and human choices are rational—as demanded by human nature.

Both the choice of lives people value and how they pursue their valued lives reflect the social context in which they live. Rationality is thus a fundamental social concept, reflecting the interdependence of individual and community wellbeing. Individuals are rational in an adaptive sense, living in a social context, and bound by decision-making costs and various psychological, computational, and other constraints. As conditions change,

if superior alternatives become available, most individuals will adapt their behavior to exploit these superior alternatives to improve their lives,[71] and others will be content to continue living the way they are. They will attempt to correct their mistakes as best they can as they struggle through life, solving problems.

Both prudent and ethical behavior are key ingredients of rationality and morality, motivated by a human instinct for self-preservation, as well as a human drive to improve one's own life (*conatus*). Self- (as distinct from purely selfish) interest is clearly a motivating force, based, however, on empathy as a foundation for both moral judgment and an instinct for survival.

Thus, being rational has to do with reflecting on one's options and the consequences of one's actions and having good reasons for one's choices.[72] As Robert Costanza *et al*. (2017) say, "most of the assigned values to goods, services, people or cultural achievements have to do with the survival of the humans as individuals, many with the wellbeing of individuals and social groups, and some with the ethical considerations humans make about other people's and other species' rights to live".[73]

Similarly, morality has deep roots in human nature. Morality is another-oriented behavior. As Mencius pointed out 2500 years ago, referring to the parable of the child (the certainty that every human being would rush to save a child about to fall into a well), every human being

is born with a natural capacity for goodness, sharing the same potential to be, and to do, good: "The goodness of human nature is like water tending to flow downward. Just as there is no water that does not flow downward, there are no humans who do not have goodness."[74] Indeed, humans often are prepared to risk their own lives to save the lives of others. They voluntarily go to war to protect their countries and their way of life. However, most, if not all, these cases pertain to circumstances where individual *conatus* aligns strongly with community and social (i.e., group) *conatus*. Mutuality of interest is the defining and binding consideration.

Group rationality and morality

The preoccupation of social choice theory, a major subfield of economics, is the congruence and consistency of individual and group decisions, the question of whether individual rationality automatically translates into group rationality. Kenneth Arrow's so-called 'impossibility theorem' (formally, 'The Possibility Theorem'), one of the contributions that won him a Nobel Prize in economics in 1972 for his 'pioneering contributions to general equilibrium theory and welfare theory', was his mathematical demonstration that even a simple attribute of individual rationality, in the sense of complete and consistent preference orderings over different states of affairs, if shared by a group of individuals, does not translate into group rationality in the same sense, when the preferences of those individuals are 'aggregated'.

Amartya Sen (2017) provides a very extensive discussion of this topic in a much wider context in his book, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*.

In his most thoughtful book titled *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) confronts the mirror image of that same challenge as it relates to morality, as distinct from rationality: "individuals have a moral code which makes the actions of collective man an outrage to their conscience."[75]

> *Teachers of morals who do not see the difference between the problem of charity within the limits of an accepted social system and the problem of justice between economic groups, holding uneven power within modern industrial society, have simply not faced the most obvious differences between the morals of groups and those of individuals. The suggestion that the fight against disease is in the same category with the fight against war reveals the same confusion.*
>
> *Our contemporary culture fails to realize the power, extent, and persistence of group egoism in human relations. It may be possible, though it is never easy, to establish just relations between individuals within a group [especially when mutuality of interest prevails] purely by moral and rational suasion and accommodation. In inter-group relations this is practically an impossibility. The relations between groups must therefore always be predominantly political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by*

any rational or moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group.

Whatever increase in social intelligence and moral goodwill may be achieved in human history, may serve to mitigate the brutalities of social conflict, but they cannot abolish the conflict itself. That could be accomplished only if human groups, whether racial, national or economic, could achieve a degree of reason and sympathy which would permit them to see and to understand the interests of others as vividly as they understand their own, and a moral goodwill which would prompt them to affirm the rights of others as vigorously as they affirm their own.[76]

Thus, current democratic processes cannot be relied upon to serve as fit-for-purpose error-correction mechanisms when the errors in question relate to major perceived or actual structural economic and social injustices—especially gross inequalities in access to universal basic services that serve as enablers. They simply serve as peaceful handover mechanisms from one elite group to another within established rules of the game reflecting current power structures. These processes cannot be used to achieve fundamental realignments in these power structures, despite promises made by those who have challenged the establishment, using these democratic processes to supposedly improve the conditions of the economically disadvantaged, the most recent US elections being a case in point.

It is important to note that complex adaptive social systems evolve and adapt through the interactions of human beings who have agency. Each human being is a creator, carrier, and transmitter of GI—actual (not artificial) general intelligence. The current state of explanatory knowledge does not give us the capability to control and direct the collective behavior of such systems toward good and safe outcomes, even if we want to do so. All we can do is create an environment that is open to learning and criticism, supported by appropriate error correction institutions such as democracy so that rational human beings with agency can coordinate their activities and cooperate by using the knowledge to their best advantage so that our collective actions do not cause irreversible harm. We cannot guarantee that outcome, and there is nothing in the laws of nature that precludes human beings from individually or collectively harming themselves.

As Cornelius Castoriadis (1987) explains, the project at hand should not be conceived as a deliberate plan to guide social life toward a predetermined destination; that is not possible. Effective social change must be underpinned and supported by a project that pursues autonomy for all individuals (universality). Through such autonomy, different social orders and associated rules of conduct will emerge, reevaluated, critically assessed and challenged as they evolve, and adjusted through an ongoing process if the environment allows.

Mindset[77] - again, but in a social context

The relevant consideration, as with individual human flourishing, is the mindset we bring to assisting with the emergence of the social environment that is most conducive to community flourishing.

The critical question is how we go about performing the distinctive role of good governance, as explained above. Wise governance, one that underpins the flourishing of diversity and freedom as foundations for the uncontrolled and continuous generation of explanatory knowledge, requires a transformation of mindset from direction and control (which is the defining attribute of current governance arrangements) to enablement and support. The latter is the mindset of a steward gardener, the former that of a social planner.

Using Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* as an analogy, public policy, dominated by disciplines such as economics that suffer from physics-envy, has chosen the road more (not less) travelled. The one dominated by a desire to understand human behaviour and, having done that, aspiring to control the aggregated version of human behaviour in a social setting, using methods such as control theory, optimization, and so on. This aspiration has served those in power very well because it is perfectly aligned with their aspirations—to control and dominate. This is not only the wrong path, but its aspirations

to nudge and control aggregate (social) human behaviour are unachievable. Its pursuit has caused endless harm and suffering.[78]

A social planner has the mindset of a director, controlling and directing the process of change in search of 'the right' ('the optimal') preconceived and (possibly) predetermined outcomes, as if we were solving purely mechanical ('control') problems. A steward gardener, on the other hand, deals with living, responsive, reflexive organisms—adaptive complex systems. They have the mindset of liberating and supporting creative change processes and creative evolutions, with no predefined path or destination, underpinned by a rich sense of diversity in all its dimensions. The focus would be on nurturing partnerships, trust, and empowerment, welcoming criticism as a source of learning and error correction.

Give the abundance of *natural* general intelligence, in the form of human beings, and our utter inability over the ages to nourish, harness, cherish, and exploit it to support human flourishing, why pursue a second best in the form of *artificial* general intelligence.

There could only be one answer – artificial general intelligence, if it were achievable, comes with the aspiration and the implicit promise of *control*. We can multiply artificial general intelligence and control it – if it were achievable. At least, that is what we think we can

do with it. So far, we have not been able to fully control and direct human beings – as individuals or groups.

Fundamentally, the choice between *natural* and *artificial* general intelligence is a choice between *good* and *evil*. One is in pursuit of liberation, the other of domination. One is fully aligned with *conatus* – the other is focused on suppressing conatus by domination and control.

The chase of artificial intelligence is closely tied up with a control mentality – as distinct from a liberating, nourishing mentality – one that embraces diversity, and wants to fertilize it with autonomy, liberty, and social cohesion for the good of humanity.

Here is the mindset of a social planner, and the problem to be solved, as stated clearly by Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen (2017, p. x):

> *A society consists of a group of people with a variety of preferences and priorities. To make fitting social decisions on behalf of the group as a whole, the society must take serious note of the people's (possibly diverse) views and interests. Aggregate assessment is central to social choice theory, but to determine how such aggregate social decisions should be made is not an easy task. There can be, as Horace pointed out long ago, 'as many preferences as there are people'. That is the task that social choice theory has to address.*

But as Friedrich Hayek (1974), also a Nobel Prize winner in economics, emphasised, knowledge is scattered, partial, fleeting, and often mistaken. No single individual or institution can have access to, let alone process, all the information needed to make fully informed decisions on behalf of society, even if we could somehow ascertain what society wants. The relevant information is dispersed among countless individuals, each with their own unique and focused insights and knowledge of their personal values and circumstances, which are continually evolving. Furthermore, as individuals and communities, human beings have agency. They can adapt and respond to attempts to control their behaviour if they disagree with the intentions of the controller.

The assumption of the supposed experts that they can dictate the best course of action for society could lead to increasing authoritarianism as decision-making shifts from individuals to the authorities. The threat to freedom and liberty is obvious.

A steward gardener totally appreciates this fundamental difference. Taking the diversity of human preferences as a given, and respecting individuals' (and their communities') rights to want to live fulfilled lives, she focuses on creating the essential conditions that will enable to pursue their valued lives—thus, the focus of a gardener shifts from control to enablement.

There is no need to make social decisions on behalf of the whole group. What the steward gardener focuses on is the creation, protection, and nourishment (with freedom and social cohesion) of an environment where diverse lives can be pursued and enjoyed, founded on individual and social imagination and creativity. Assessment remains critical, but it does not need to rely on aggregation.

A steward gardener will be open to learning from her errors and will welcome the opportunities to correct them. She would also use the knowledge gained from local experimentation in a variety of environments as a source for sharing success stories for the benefit of the health of the garden at large.

Abby Innes (2024, p. 616) expressed it best in the context of economic policy making:

> *Neoliberalism fails because the neoclassical economics that underpins it is fundamentally utopian; and it is doomed to fail for the same ontological and epistemological reasons that condemned Soviet socialism. What these politically opposed doctrines hold in common is closed-system economic reasoning from axiomatic deduction presented as 'a governing science'. It follows that both must tend to fail on contact with a three-dimensional reality in an always evolving, open-system world, subject to Knightian uncertainty. The dark historical joke is that machine models of the economy, both Soviet and neoclassical neoliberal economics, converge on the same statecraft*

of quantification, output-planning, target-setting, forecasting and the presumption of only 'rational' – socially productive – firms.

The result is both systems is state and economic failure and the creation of production regimes that are a grotesque caricature of those promised, only now in the midst of an ecological emergency. It follows that we need an urgent revival of analytical pluralism in government and a non-utopian scientific realism about the true scope of the ecological crisis.

The distinction between open and closed systems, and the interface between open systems and limited information or uncertainty, is one of the drivers behind efforts to develop alternative approaches or frameworks to addressing economic and social problems that can accommodate generalized Darwinism, open-energy systems, including economic and social systems, and complex adaptive phenomena and associated processes in an integrated manner.[79]

Physicists, unlike public policy advisers, understood a long time ago the root cause of the impossibility of the control-based policy paradigm advocated by neoclassical economics. Physicists Richard Feynman and Murray Gell-Mann, both Nobel laureates, pondered how much harder physics would be if particles could think.[80] Guess what? The particles comprising social systems are individual human beings who can not only think but have agency too, and the social systems that reflect their

collective and reflexive[81] behaviour are complex adaptive systems that have emergent properties. Nevertheless, economists insist on directing and controlling the uncontrollable, achieving the unachievable, and those in power continue to follow their advice mindlessly at the expense of those they claim to serve.

As Hayek explained so well, the fundamental danger here is 'the pretence of knowledge', of access to information about human behaviour that is simply not available to any institution or government. That pretence or assumption makes these institutions overconfident. Moreover, their attempts to control individual and social human behaviour, based on this false confidence, create unintended consequences and needless suffering.

A genuine appreciation of the full implications of the distinct characteristics and behaviour of complex adaptive social systems may well lead to a change of governance mindset from control to liberation. The most promising governance approach to navigating such a system toward good outcomes, with no assurance of success, is to liberate and support their agents (human beings), unleashing their creativity in social settings that are harmonious and cohesive—not to control them. Such a governance mindset would be based on trust, placing primary emphasis on enablement, support, and autonomy.

In Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) words, "The future is not what will happen to us, but what we will do", in other words, the emergent outcomes of our collective

and creative social interactions. We just want to ensure as best we can, through good governance practices, that the collective impact of these evolutions of different lifestyles, different ways of living, creating, and interacting with each other and with the wider natural world reflects a huge range of diversity founded on freedom, does not threaten the harmony and viability of the natural or social world which is our shared home.

Both 'good' and 'evil' depend on the mind being fertilized by diversity, freedom/liberty, and autonomy. This is the ground for the endless struggle between them. Of the struggle between the control mindset that wants to create the obedient AGI that it wants to substitute for the rebellious creative human mind, and the liberating mindset that wants to give every opportunity to each unique human mind to contribute to human flourishing. The more 'open' the societies in which we live, the greater the chances for 'good' to win this struggle – but it will always be an endless struggle.

Two crucial ingredients offer the potential to guide social emergence toward 'good' attractors, liberty and universality - covered in the next two chapters.

VIII. Freedom and liberty

In his search for meaning through creativity, to be able to use his unique gift of mind to its full potential to ease his suffering, man needs freedom. However, the gift of freedom, if accepted, is a two-edged sword; it comes with a burden. Like life itself, freedom too, is both a source of creativity and joy as well as suffering. Freedom comes with responsibility, and responsibility has consequences. This is the human condition.

Once man accepts the gift of freedom, he is condemned to be free. "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."[82] Thus, the gift and the condemnation are two sides of the coin of freedom for those who choose to embrace authentic living – facing the predicament to choose and to make decisions. Human beings, while craving freedom, also fear it because the freedom to choose to make decisions also forces human beings to bear the consequences of these choices.[83]

Human beings have the choice to embrace freedom and actively use liberated reason and consciousness to pursue all forms of creativity. This is the path to authentic living and human beings, although they cannot control their ultimate destiny (i.e., death), nevertheless have the option to be free in this sense—to pursue the rational, creative, and spiritual path of seeking meaning while also exploring ways of achieving oneness with nature by

understanding its laws and trying to control and use them to serve *conatus*. That would be transforming an anguish, a fear, into a joyful (albeit passing) existence. Whether we grab this opportunity to live fulfilling lives or not is entirely in our hands.

The mind needs to be liberated to be able to perform to its full capacity. To imagine, to question, criticize, defy and disobey, to non-conform and show resistance, as well as to cooperate for mutual advantage voluntarily. These are the ultimate sources of human creativity for exploring ways of living meaningful lives.

Freedom needs to be exercised in social settings, which is where explanatory knowledge is created, and creative activities take place. *Liberty* refers to the expression of freedom in a social setting; it is constrained freedom underpinned by shared values. It embraces and celebrates the individual's freedom to pursue the life s/he values while also protecting others' rights to do the same.[84]

Thus, we speak of three types of freedom in a social setting. Freedom to pursue the diverse lives we value (including our faith and beliefs), freedom of thought and expression, and freedom from any form of domination or oppression.

Of course, several others have been suggested. For example, Hannah Arendt's (1958, 1960) emphasis on political freedom, freedom to act, and freedom to participate.[85] Amartya Sen's (1999) "development as freedom"

is an all-encompassing concept of freedom referring to individuals' capabilities to live and enjoy the diverse lives they value. Slavoj Žižek (2023) examines many additional dimensions of freedom, stressing its transient and fragile nature.

Critically, freedom is not an eternal state, a utopia, to be achieved; it evolves continually and comes under different types of threats from technological developments and other sources. It needs to be vigilantly protected on an ongoing basis.[86]

For Baruch Spinoza,

> *Life of reason is a life free from the trammels of fear, superstition and unreasonable hopes and desires; it is a life based instead on knowledge, on science and rational inquiry, on what really matters in practice to humankind. Freedom of thought is essential for progress, and for the flourishing of individuals and society*.[87]

All fertile ground for the generation of 'adequate ideas.'

As Isaiah Berlin (2014) expressed it,

> *The essence of liberty has always lain in the ability to choose as you wish to choose, because you wish so to choose, uncoerced, unbullied, not swallowed up in some vast system; and in the right to resist, to be unpopular, to stand up for your convictions merely because they are your convictions. That is true freedom, and without it there is neither freedom of any kind, nor even the illusion of it.*

This tension between authority and the freedom of the mind is nicely captured by Simone Weil when she says, "Almost since the beginning, the individual has been ill at ease in Christianity. This uneasiness relates closely to the role of intelligence in human life. Intelligence requires total liberty, implying the right to deny everything and allowing no domination."[88]

And here is what Mikhail Bakunin (1871) had to say:

> *I am a fanatic lover of liberty, considering it as the unique condition under which intelligence, dignity, and human happiness can develop and grow; […] I mean the only kind of liberty that is worthy of the name, liberty that consists of the full development of all of the material, intellectual and moral powers that are latent in each person; liberty that recognizes no restrictions other than those determined by the laws of our own individual nature.*
>
> *The freedom of spontaneous events born of the ontic center and the freedom to mold things in such, and such, a way enhances our sense of vitality and makes life more intense. The joy of creating things of value, self-conquest (freeing the self from selfishness and its instincts), rising above the world, and finally the spontaneous creation of new forms, new norms, new ideas in the minds of individuals – all that is the possible result of man's positive freedom.*

It is in this very sense that freedom is the relation of humanity to the total life process. Our passions and

spirituality is nothing other than a yearning to live a life that is perfectly in tune with nature and the universe – in our search for meaning.

Humans are not only rational and spiritual but also passionate and social beings. Indeed, after emphasizing that increasing one's power to maintain and enhance one's existence is the prime directive of all beings, in his *Ethics,* Spinoza goes on to point out that achieving this depends largely on improving our relationships with other people.[89] People can practice and enjoy their freedoms on their own (as individualists) or with other human beings (cooperatively). Studies of human evolution tend to support a strong leaning toward the latter.[90]

Liberation encourages prosocial and cooperative rather than individualistic and selfish behaviors. Humans are social creatures. In everything they are and in everything they do, they inherit the whole past; this gives tradition an inescapable importance as well.[91]

> *Individualism and community, no more than liberty and equality, are not necessarily opposed. Individualism can be supported by the community just as every person should have an equal claim to be free. Indeed, the ideal would be a form of communal individuality in which the maximum degree of individuality is encouraged compatible with social solidarity*.[92]

This is the essence of the embrace and celebration of diversity.

Charles Darwin seemed to agree that this is true of the evolution of living species at large:

> *True, Darwin viewed animal species as being in a metaphorical 'competition' with each other. However, Darwin also observed that the most successful species were often the ones whose members were best at cooperating with each other [i.e., the survival of the most cooperative]. As Darwin notes in The Origin of Species (1859), "Those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring".*[93]

Indeed, according to David Sloan Wilson (2025)[94],

> *Darwin's true legacy should be his insights on the evolution of prosociality, defined as any behavior oriented toward the welfare of others or one's group as a whole. These insights can be described in two stages. First, what he discovered about the evolution of prosociality in all species. Second, what he discovered about prosociality as the signature adaptation of our own species. … Even though prosociality is selectively disadvantageous within groups, groups of individuals who behave prosocially toward each other will robustly outcompete groups of individuals who cannot cohere. … Darwin did not show that prosociality evolves anywhere and everywhere in nature. On the contrary, he showed that it evolves only under special conditions, namely when between-group selection outweighs within-group selection. … Having outlined the conditions for the evolution of prosociality in all species, Darwin then identified*

between-group selection as an especially strong force in human evolution. The modern literature on generalized Darwinism affirms his insight. Nearly everything that distinguishes us from other species is a form of prosociality that evolved by between-group selection – including our moral psychology and ability to transmit large amounts of learned information across generations – our very capacity for cultural evolution.

Human beings are endowed by nature with both selfish and unselfish impulses. The individual is a nucleus of energy which is organically related from the very beginning with other energy, but which maintains, nevertheless, its own discrete existence. Every type of energy in nature seeks to preserve and perpetuate itself and to gain fulfillment within terms of its unique genius. The energy of human life does not differ in this from the whole of nature. It differs only in the degree of reason which directs the energy. Man is the only creature which is fully self-conscious. His reason gives him the capacity for self-transcendence. He sees himself in relation to his environment and in relation to other life. Reason enables him, within limits, to direct his energy so that it will flow in harmony, and not in conflict, with other life. Reason is not the sole basis of moral virtue in man. His social impulses are more deeply rooted than his rational life. Reason may extend and stabilize, but it does not create the capacity to affirm other life than his own.[95]

Social cooperation underpinned by freedom and inspired by our passions as well will be based on mutual agreement by free people. A governance arrangement cannot claim legitimacy,

> *unless it subscribes to two reigning principles. First, it must show equal concern for the fate of every person over whom it claims dominion. Second, it must respect, fully the responsibility and right of each person to decide for himself how to make something valuable of his life.*[96]

This boils down to the principle that each person has the right to be treated with the *attitude* (not just words) that they are a human being whose dignity fundamentally matters. It also has strong alignment with the principle of attempting to minimize avoidable suffering and disadvantage while maximizing the real (effective) freedom, i.e., the opportunities and capabilities, of every individual to live as they wish.[97]

Critically, one is free not only in having the ability to choose reflectively among a set of options but also in having a rich set of worthwhile options to choose from. Thus, freedom to create through exploiting the richness offered by diversity is an integral aspect of freedom in a social setting—i.e., of liberty. We are individually genuinely free when we have the autonomy to make distinctive contributions to society.

Through inclusive creation, fertilized by freedom and diversity and informed by explanatory knowledge, we would be enjoying inclusivity and equity in producing as well as enjoying the outcomes of our efforts. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) was only half right when he wrote, in *The Social Contract*, "Man was born free, and he

is everywhere in chains," referring to the constraints imposed on human beings by the structures and expectations of society. There are always tradeoffs. A well-functioning, harmonious society offers protection, as well as enablers, as a source of human flourishing.

Domination and power

To survive as well as thrive, human beings should be able to enjoy the freedom to use their mind (i.e., reason and consciousness) freely. Only then can the mind pursue 'adequate ideas'. To be able to do so, humans also need to enjoy freedom from any oppression. These are the essential freedoms and supporting liberties[98] for human beings; otherwise, they cannot achieve their oneness with nature (a foundation of spirituality) and perform their distinctive role as an integral part of the universe.

The human mind can generate both adequate and inadequate ideas to use Spinoza's terminology. Spinoza (1670) warned his readers "against the power of religion to control their lives by encouraging in them the emotions of superstition, fear and hope, which the clergy use to influence them in the direction that the church, and the temporal powers who find it such a useful ally, wish to lead them."[99]

This reminds us of the observation by Simone Weil. "Almost since the beginning, the individual has been ill at

ease in Christianity. This uneasiness relates closely to the role of intelligence in human life. Intelligence requires total liberty, implying the right to deny everything, and allowing no domination."[100] Of course, the power of ideology, exploited by the state among others, is equally threatening.

Liberation (or emancipation), protecting freedom from sources of domination (including ideology, dogma, and religion), provides the most fertile ground for both fair competition and socially beneficial collaboration to emerge in support of collective, sustained flourishing. These are also the conditions that serve as antidotes to the survival of the most powerful) through domination founded on institutionalized privilege.

Power is against uncontrolled, free knowledge creation and dissemination—the widespread sharing (i.e., socialization) of explanatory knowledge. It wants to block '*The Way*'—the unleashing of the creativity of the mind for the broader 'good.' Knowledge creation presents a challenge, a threat, to the status quo. Naturally, those in positions of power tend to be conservative; the status quo provides a base for their current power structure. "Autocrats who plan to rule in perpetuity don't like to encourage the birth of ideas that might displace them. But liberal democracies inspire the creation of new visions, even at the price of questioning their own foundations."[101]

In a social setting, one of the greatest threats to sustained and shared prosperity is the accumulation and abuse of power. This threat finds its fertile soil in the lethal combination of the human need and yearning for safety and security, reflecting a fear of the unknown and uncertainty, on the one hand, and the false promise of those who seek power and domination (religious, political, economic) that they can deliver safety and security in return for servitude or subservience of some sort. To secure their basic needs and safety, human beings may choose to deliberately, out of their own free will, succumb to authority.

As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014) explains,

> *If people are given a choice to delegate some of the power over their lives to another human agency (e.g. a government), they will do so only to the extent that they perceive that agency will help them achieve what they expect to make them happy. The Mongol hordes followed their khans freely, expecting to be led to loot by their leaders. The Chinese followed their emperor's will in large part because they believed that he was the representative of the heavenly powers that through him would provide rain, good crops and a prosperous life. This perspective differs from that of Jefferson and the Enlightenment philosophers in that it does not assume that humans have a right to pursue happiness (or any other natural right). It simply says that, if a government fails to allow its people to pursue happiness, it is likely to fall.*[102]

An example is provided by the collapse of communist governments across the globe, notably that of the Soviet Union and all the satellite countries under their rule. What made this sudden turn of events so unexpected was that these governments, influenced by the Leninist-Stalinist model, had achieved almost total control over the behaviors of their populations. It was assumed that when people knew that resistance to the regime entailed torture and often death, while collaboration could lead to power and a comfortable life, they would conform to the orders from above. However, this is not what happened.

The masses took it upon themselves to throw off their chains without help from outside and against all reason. Clearly, there seemed to be something more to human behavior than the pursuit of safety and security. They also wanted the opportunity to flourish, and they knew, based on their experience, that these regimes would not provide them with such an opportunity.[103]

As explained in the next chapter, the only sustainable path for the opportunity to flourish in a social setting is universality – universal access to the enablers of sustained flourishing. This path to full liberation, while most promising, is not a smooth one. The explanation provided for optimism about the future of life in Part IX relates to the outcome of the struggle between the forces

of good and evil in a social context. These are two opposing forces, both strongly aligned to *conatus*, that is, to the natural inclination of all organisms (including human beings) to do their best to survive —the will to live. One is to dominate, the other to collaborate.

To be able to dominate, one needs access to power. Our current circumstances are an outcome of the triumph of institutions (including laws) that legitimize the concentration and abuse of power of all sorts, political, economic, and religious, by the few and for their benefit.[104]

> *The rise of modern democracy, beginning with the Eighteenth Century, is sometimes supposed to have substituted the consent of the governed for the power of royal families and aristocratic classes as the cohesive force of national society. [...] But the creeds and institutions of democracy have never become fully divorced from the special interests of the commercial classes who conceived and developed them. It was their interest to destroy political restraint upon economic activity, and they therefore weakened the authority of the state and made it more pliant to their needs....The net result is that political power has been made more responsible to economic power.*[105]

Through liberation from all sources of power, including ideology and dogma, complemented by resources that enable autonomy, we can unleash the creative potential of the human mind as well as interactions among communities and the wider natural world. Cooperation and

collaboration founded on liberation appear as the foundations of the social order that underpins the sustainable survival as well as flourishing (or thriving) of all living organisms in harmony among themselves and across their respective ecosystems.

In a human and social context, the ultimate source of power is the state (as distinct from polity and democratic government). The state and the bureaucracy that serves it are the privileged instruments of social and political power; they protect the privileges of the powerful. Just consider the salaries and lifestyles of public servants compared with most of the rest of the public whom they are supposed to be serving. Furthermore, ask yourself who is serving whom. What we are looking for is a social order where the people rule while the government and bureaucrats represent and serve them; they obey, not the other way around.

Colin Ward (2004) highlights the distinction between society and the state, the former represented by civil society. Referring to the works of Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer, he refers to the tension between two principles of human behavior—the political and social. "Buber saw the characteristics of the political principle to be power, authority, hierarchy, and dominion, while the social principle was visible to him in all spontaneous human associations built around a common need or common interest. The problem that arose was that of identi-

fying the reason for the continual ascendancy of the political principle".[106] This relates closely to Chomsky's discussion of anarchism, which is based on the basic principle that any form of authority or domination has a burden of proof to bear; it has to demonstrate that it is legitimate.[107]

The state (as distinct from a legitimate representative government) as the embodiment of the 'political principle' potentially provides the opportunity and the institutional support for those who pursue the path of domination to promote their interests at the expense of others. There is nothing inherently good or bad about the state, although it creates a perfect vehicle for the concentration and abuse of power, which is ironic because we have endowed the state with the powers it possesses (including the power to use force) to protect us from concentration and abuse of power.

Indeed, according to one of the most popular (although strongly contested)[108] narratives of the evolution of the state, as related by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651),

> *individuals chose to put an end to the war of all against all, by accepting to cede part of their freedom to the state in exchange for its protection. Public authority would thus have arisen from consent, […] in which the subjects submit to the authority of the prince and, even better, themselves compose the tunic of his power. On this absolutist vision, it is the responsibility of the state as sovereign authority to ensure institutional order and guarantee civil peace.*[109]

Again, we clearly see *conatus* in a social context at play here; the instinct of self-preservation by society itself concedes or delegates power to the state in good faith.

Unfortunately, centuries of lived experience amply shows that the state should also be watched and controlled through appropriate institutions. It serves as a potential instrument for the concentration and abuse of power while also, no doubt, offering the potential to serve as an expression of power for the broader public good. A demand for responsibility and accountability should always accompany the delegation of power.

Willingly or unwittingly, the state, through its institutions, the laws it enacts, and the ideologies it supports, also provides the levers for the concentration and abuse of power (i.e., domination) in the hands of all forms of private entities, individuals, businesses, religious bodies, as well as others who seek power. The state provides vehicles for both institutionalizing power in the hands of these entities and legitimizing it. Nobody can claim that the distribution of wealth and privilege in this world is the outcome of a fair game played on a level playing field. It is rather an outcome of institutions deliberately created for their distributional consequences.[110]

This is not an argument against business, wealth creation or representative democratic government, all of

which have their place in a well-functioning social order. It is an argument against concentration and abuse of power in all its forms and the link of wealth (material and financial wealth) to political influence. Moreover, to repeat, it is an argument for ensuring that a demand for responsibility and accountability should always accompany the delegation of power.

We must disconnect the nexus of the exclusive association of 'value' with market value, the concentration of market value (i.e., material wealth) in the hands of a smaller percentage of human beings, and the link between material wealth and political influence (i.e., power). We must do so peacefully and in a very considerate way. Meanwhile, we should do everything that is practically and peacefully possible to ensure that the creation of real wealth in the form of explanatory knowledge is created in an inclusive way, helping all of humanity.

In a world where people are free to move to and live wherever they wish, another choice presents itself. A choice in joining communities offering different lifestyles and opportunities for individuals to flourish. Indeed, "individual choice is only possible where individuals are not subject to tribal affiliation and free to move to another place if they so wish … This is one of the conditions that make possible 'isonomia' (no-rule), where people are equal precisely by virtue of being free."[111]

The dispersal of power and authority is central to liberal humanism. Good governance aims to make individuals and communities free to enjoy the lives they value and protect and nourish those freedoms while ensuring that the institutions protecting these freedoms remain strong.[112] In that spirit, what we should care about, from a collective governance perspective, is that as individuals and communities live their varied and valued lives, their collective impact does not cross vital environmental, social, political, and economic boundaries—i.e., to liberate and nourish the forces that lead to the emergence of good and sustainable 'attractors' for the evolution of the social order.

Values

Shared values serve as a platform for social order and social cohesion, critical ingredients for satisfying the human need for safety and security (an integral component of *conatus* in a social setting). It is impossible to realize the potential offered by diversity for *conatus* in the absence of enduring social cohesion. Thus, corresponding to the idea of liberty as constrained freedom is the idea of shared values as constrained pluralism, jointly serving as platforms for social cohesion.

We can be perfectly free to enjoy different lifestyles and different beliefs and choose to socialize with whomever we want, provided we agree on some fundamental

shared values. As Issa Mansoori (2025) explains, institutions serve as the embodiment of shared values; they embed shared values into the fabric of society. Crucially, to be enduring, both constrained freedom and constrained pluralism, underpinned by shared values, need to emerge; they need to be self-imposed and willingly embraced because they serve human *conatus*—not imposed by a higher authority to serve and protect the interests of existing power structures.

What are the shared values that would support and sustain liberty while harnessing empathy as a foundation for embracing diversity, all in the service of sustained individual and community flourishing. I suggest the following: care for all forms of life, concern for the fate of every person, respect for the dignity of each human being, the embrace of diversity, openness to criticism, emphasis on responsibility, and a strong sense of shared destiny with the wider natural world.

Unity of value should focus on equally shared human freedoms, complemented by a strong sense of empathy. Freedom from any type of domination (economic, social, political, religious, ideological, personal) so that we can exercise our freedom to use both our reason and our conscience to support surviving and thriving. Note the equal emphasis on both rights and responsibilities in this conceptualization of the unity of value. Rights are, crucially, accompanied and complemented by responsibilities. To the best of their abilities, individuals and

communities should be made to contribute to the preparation and baking of the pie they expect to share.

Diversity finds its most fertile ground for flourishing when surrounded by empathy. This is also the essence of Ronald Dworkin's (2011) big idea of unity of value in a political context. A political system that embeds the values of concern for the well-being of every human being and respects their rights and obligations to pursue the lives they value.[113] Indeed, this principle crosses all political boundaries. One of the maxims of the First International,[114] to which all factions subscribed, was Karl Marx's slogan: 'No Rights Without Duties, No Duties Without Rights.' In a free society, as revolutionaries of all kinds generally understood, we would enjoy freedoms (rights), but we would also have responsibilities (duties) we would have to exercise. The concept of individual autonomy becomes meaningless when it denies the obligations that every individual owes to society as social responsibilities.[115]

As Martin Kronauer (2024) explains, from the very beginning, the discipline of sociology conceived society as constituted by the interdependence of its members, and social cohesion, in consequence, was to depend on the institutionalized recognition of mutual responsibilities.[116]

Simply giving through redistribution, without the complementary efforts of contributing and producing, cannot provide a platform for sustained prosperity. Inclusion is critical, but it needs to include both receiving and contributing. Both are critical and complementary. Charity, through government agencies and private charitable organizations, relieves people and communities of their *pain*. Nevertheless, to eradicate or at least substantially reduce suffering, we need to invest in human capabilities and opportunities, again through private and government action, to remove the root causes of persistent disadvantage – through universality.

IX. Universality and resilience

Authentic living is about creating your own (individual and community) meaning in an inherently meaningless world through creativity. Universality refers to the complementary principle, and moral obligation, to give people the opportunities to live an authentic life, recognizing the uniqueness of each human being and the potential that uniqueness offers for both individual and shared social flourishing. We want to create the greatest opportunity for that potential to be actualized in a peaceful and supportive community setting.

The big idea is not only to facilitate the emergence of appropriate institutions to support human survival and flourishing but also to ensure that they work for everyone (e.g., through universal access to good health and education services). By thus enabling "equality of access to advantage for everyone" (using Gerald Cohen's (1990) framing), extending existing privileges enjoyed by just a few to others, we provide human beings with the best opportunity to contribute to the productivity and resilience of the societies in which they live – flourishing and finding meaning in the process.

To be able to actualize the potential that their uniqueness offers, as well as celebrating it, human beings need both autonomy and harmony in a social setting. Universality provides the glue that binds *diversity in unity* and *unity in diversity* as a platform for creativity.

This is facilitated by both inclusive knowledge creation and by reducing discontent, i.e., by giving everyone the opportunity to make a direct contribution to prosperity while maintaining social cohesion. This is how the embrace of diversity and the achievement of social cohesion make their fundamental contributions to the inclusive creation of explanatory knowledge in the service of sustained flourishing.

Universality thus reflects both principles of the values equation covered in Richard Dworkin's (2011) work—equal concern for the fate of every person and respect for the responsibility and right of each person to decide for themself how to make something valuable of their life. Care can be delivered through access to universal basic services (UBS), responsibility delivered in any form individuals and communities choose.

Universality, equality of access to advantage for everyone, has two distinct but complementary dimensions. Communal, shared access to a set of system level enablers, which I explain with the help of a *wellbeing garden* metaphor, and individual access to a set of basic services that underpin both individual and community resilience.

Wellbeing garden

If you think of the many communities we belong to as expanding concentric circles, with us as individuals positioned in the middle of these circles, we find that our

shared problems require (or would benefit from) access to some common enablers.[117] I represent these enablers collectively using the metaphor of a wellbeing garden (Fig. 3). We can then extend the metaphor to think of good government as a steward gardener.

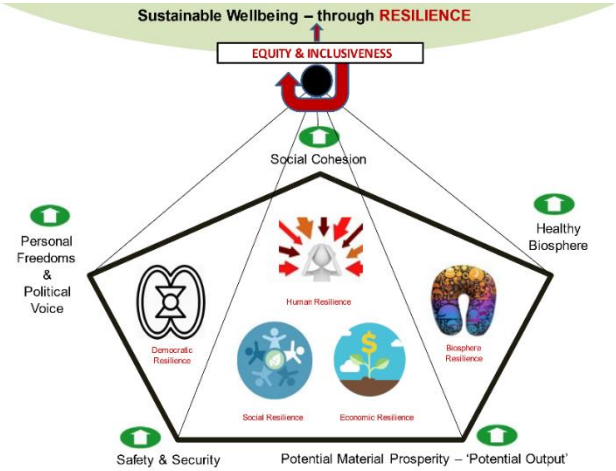

Figure 3: Well-being Garden (author's creation)

The wellbeing garden stands for the socio-ecological system that provides fertile ground for individuals and their communities, valuing very diverse lives, to survive and thrive. Its perimeter is defined by the essential dimensions of that ecosystem, the common ingredients that would enable a rich variety of valued lives to be enjoyed in harmony with nature and across diverse communities. Once these enablers are made available universally and on an enduring basis, then it would be left to individual communities to choose how they wish to live their lives – i.e., to flourish.

These enablers are:

- A natural environment conducive to healthy human life—hence, the quality of the biosphere matters.
- Broader material and financial conditions underpinning material prosperity.
- The need and desire to enjoy safety and security—founded on social order.
- Access to rights and liberties (i.e., personal freedoms) to choose all aspects of human lives, i.e., no domination. Sharing the power to influence collective decisions (i.e., having an effective political voice).
- Social cohesion—living together in peace and harmony.

These five systemic enablers for sustainable collective flourishing are strongly complementary and interdependent—again, a strong connection with Whitehead's emphasis on relatedness and Kumar's on ecology. By way of example, if social cohesion collapses, both the sources of our material prosperity (i.e., the economy) and our safety and security would be compromised. If we cause serious harm to the biosphere, certainly, in the long run, we also end up compromising both our social and economic infrastructures.

It is critical to recognize that it is not only the availability of these five outcomes that underpin sustained individual and social flourishing but also the need for effective universal access to them by all members of society, current and future, whatever their circumstances, hence the aspiration of leaving no one behind.

Of course, this is by no means a new idea. For thousands of years, thoughtful minds pondered such questions. What is the best way to construct or support the emergence of a fair social order where everyone has a chance to flourish. How can we ensure that individuals and communities are able to freely strive to reach their potential so that they can live fulfilling lives. The catalyst for these explorations has always been the accumulation and abuse of power in the hands of various concentrated interest groups (landowners, aristocratic groups, monarchs, churches of all varieties, priests, colonial powers, business classes, and so on) and the institutions that represent them. Such abuse has repeatedly brought communities (including Indigenous peoples) close to the point of social breakdown under the weight of the stresses it generates.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Confucius, Socrates and Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), living and teaching in different parts of the world, separated by great distances and almost certainly totally unaware of each other's existence, let alone teachings and speaking completely different languages, were converging on the

view that the social order of the time had to change from one where power and wealth were passed down exclusively through hereditary bloodlines, to alternative orders that were more open to social mobility. This, in turn, provided fertile ground for the emergence of the idea that what is available to the few should and could be available to all, i.e., universality.[118]

Role of good government

A few words about the distinctive role of government in providing system level enablers, as well as acting as a steward for the wellbeing garden. There is an important distinction to be made between *government* and the *state*.

Government (polity) is an institution deliberately created by the community to coordinate and undertake collective action to serve the needs of the community. Its authority is justified solely based on this ability. This delegated authority is always contestable through democratic processes of criticism and error correction in the form of a change of government or policies. This relates closely to the distinction made between society and the state by Colin Ward.[119]

A government—or better still, a polity—is an ensemble of institutions designed to deal with the problems of consociational life in an orderly and hopefully fair manner. Every institutionalized association that constitutes a system for handling public affairs—with or without

the presence of a state—is necessarily a government. By contrast, every state, although necessarily a form of government, has often served as a force for class repression and control.[120]

Quite properly, the word politics itself contains the Greek word for 'city' or *polis* (communal social arrangement), and its use in classical Athens, together with democracy, connoted the direct governing of the city by its citizens. Politics, almost by definition, is the active engagement of free citizens in the handling of their municipal affairs and the defense of their freedom. One can almost say that politics is the embodiment of what the French revolutionaries of the 1790s called *civicisme.*[121]

Abraham Lincoln provides one answer to the question about the government's distinctive role in providing the enablers that surround the wellbeing garden. "The legitimate object of government, is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but cannot do, at all, or cannot, so well do, for themselves in their separate, and individual capacities."[122]

Lincoln provides the *raison d'être* for public policy—i.e., collective action organized by the government. And the perimeter of the wellbeing garden represents the *domain* of the distinctive contribution of government to safety and prosperity. These are the things that a community of people needs to have done but cannot do at all or cannot so well do for themselves in their separate and individual capacities.

There are advantages (in terms of both effectiveness and efficiency) in providing these enablers collectively and then sharing them. We develop all sorts of communal (collective) organizations (governments and a variety of institutions) to organize the development of these enablers and the distribution of their services. This defines the distinctive role of government.

Resilience and universal basic services

Various dimensions of resilience sit in the middle of the wellbeing garden. Resilience provides the bridge to sustainable flourishing. I adopt a commonly used definition for resilience, which is the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and successfully adapt to adverse events or disruptions.[123]Two key dimensions of resilience are highlighted in this definition: the ability to absorb shocks (i.e., to survive) and the ability to bounce back following shocks, to continue living the lives we value, albeit possibly in newly imagined ways (i.e., to thrive). Thus, resilience aligns perfectly well with *conatus* – the human desire to survive and thrive.

'Anti-fragility' represents a complementary approach that is primarily focused on strengthening the thriving limb of resilience. It urges us to embrace radical uncertainty as an opportunity, challenge, and platform for improving our lives - flourishing.[124]

This is the mindset of those who have chosen the path of authentic living in search for meaning in life. It can be supported by community-based institutions that provide social insurance against temporary, unexpected disruptions to the normal flow of life. Such institutions cannot be imported from other countries and/or imposed from the top. They need to be nourished from within, supported by freedom and liberty – they need to emerge.

Universal access to basic services is one way, in my mind the best way, to invest in individual, and through that community resilience. Caring means providing everyone with an opportunity to become a stakeholder in our society by giving them access to education, healthcare, housing, an employment opportunity, a minimum level of adequate income, looking after those who cannot look after themselves, and making sure that everyone has a voice in matters that affect them.

This is the essence of the idea behind UBS[125], as distinct from *Universal Basic Income*[126]. One of the most contentious aspects of the conversations surrounding these ideas is whether these support systems are to be universal or means-tested. My preference is for means-tested access to government-provided and/or funded primary services. Among other considerations and benefits, this also contributes to the affordability of these policies, thus reducing resistance to their introduction on pure fiscal grounds.

Taking the provision of universal health care as an example (the principle applies to the provision of all critical basic services that should be made available to all citizens), the Singapore government's financial philosophy is to: "offer universal health-care coverage to our citizens, with a financing system (a compulsory savings account) anchored on the twin philosophies of individual responsibility and affordable health care for all".[127]

The five objectives of the system are to: "1. Become a healthy nation by promoting good health; 2. Promote individual responsibility for one's own health and avoid over-reliance on state welfare or third-party medical insurance; 3. Ensure good and affordable basic medical services for all; 4. Engage competition and market forces to improve service and raise efficiency; 5. Intervene directly in the health-care sector when necessary, where the market fails to keep health-care costs down."[128] Those who are not able to accumulate a sufficiently large private savings account, possibly because they cannot work or their savings are not adequate, would be supported by the government. This is an illustration of a practical, as well as pragmatic, application of the twin values of universal care and individual responsibility.
Raghuram Rajan (2020):

> *Inequality is a real problem today, but it is the inequality of opportunity, of access to capabilities, of place, not just of incomes and wealth. Higher spending and thus taxes may be necessary, not to punish the rich but to*

> *help the left-behind find new opportunities. This requires fresh policies not discredited old ones.*

These policies need to be focused on reducing suffering by increasing opportunities and capabilities to pursue valued lives. For the current adult population, this needs to be delivered through training and employment opportunities as the top priority and conditional cash support if the employment option is not available. Care also involves in-kind support as required for health and housing. For the young generation, the most effective and enduring way of showing care is to invest in them: in their education, health, and housing.

As Philippe Aghion *et al*. (2021) point out with reference to the work of Monique Canto-Sperber (2019), having access to opportunities and capabilities to flourish (through UBS or similar arrangements),

> *helps liberate the individual, by enabling him not only to provide for his own needs, but also to position himself to have access to resources such as training, a better job, and the ability to determine his life. The vision of the individual and of freedom inherent in this argument is the opposite of the vision espoused by advocates of 'less government'. For the latter, any benefit payment is a handout and encourages laziness, whereas for Canto-Sperber, we stimulate initiative by giving individuals the means to act.*

This is also in full alignment with Michael Sandel's (2022) argument that making such basic services (basic

enablers) universally available provides a strong platform for upward social mobility, as shown in Scandinavian countries.

Access to assets provides a source of opportunities and capabilities for young people. In this vein, Conal Smith (2018) argues for asset-based aid for high-risk children. Having identified children who are at high risk of future poverty (wards of the state), we would provide them with a reasonably generous cash endowment at the age of 18 so that they have the foundation for a positive start to their adult lives. The purposes for which this asset can be used—such as education and skilling—would be strictly prescribed.

A give-and-care system[129] needs to be based on a strong partnership between government and communities. While the government will almost certainly provide cash, most of the care will be delivered by the communities. However, equity and fairness are not a one-sided game. Every giving needs to be strongly conditional on need and effort on the part of the recipient. The provision of government funding should be accompanied by a strict requirement of accountabilities for the delivery of targeted outcomes.

You will note, at the top of Fig 3, a hook that links the wellbeing garden to sustainability and resilience through equity and inclusiveness. Equity symbolizes universal access to the system-level enablers defining

the perimeter of the garden. Inclusiveness refers to the processes followed in governing for sustainable well-being. Working with communities is the most effective way of achieving outcomes for these individuals and their communities.[130]

A very distinct and critical role of good government is to consider and protect the wellbeing not only of those living at present but also of future generations. This is the essence of the stewardship role of good governance. No individual or small groups of individuals would have the capacity to undertake this responsibility on their own. Only good government can.

Dealing with evil and extremism

Universality also offers the most effective way of addressing the threats posed by evil and extremism. This challenge was presented most forcefully, along the following lines, by someone who was kind enough to read a draft copy of an earlier book.

> *If we allow local communities to define their own vision of well-being, this includes the visions of Christian Nationalists, Islamic fundamentalists, fascists, and other members of the global, national, and local community who do not agree with liberalism, pluralism, and democratic governance. In addition, I think of the response of Chinese political thinkers to the Warring States and Three Kingdoms periods – the idea that local warlords are forever arising and competing for dominance, and*

that the only check on debilitating spirals of warfare between localities is a strong central governance that has a monopoly on violence. (This of course was also Thomas Hobbes' position in his Leviathan, 1651.)

These questions loom very large in the US where red states are embracing majority fundamentalist and anti-democratic positions while these states have local enclaves (in their cities) of liberal citizens who are adversely affected by them. You could never convince these fundamentalist forces at the state level that their sub-localities ought to be free to decide on abortion, gun control, Medicaid coverage, etc. on their own. The problem is how to reach consensus when there really is none to begin with, and when people feel quite strongly about their own views of what the good life entails. Pluralism is both a reality and a human good to be celebrated but resolving conflicts between incommensurate values remains the primary moral and governance problem of our era.

The problem is, how to generate majority support from an ethics that will never be supported by religious fun damentalists or people who have a vision of individual liberty that owes little or nothing to the well-being of the collectivity. This is the problem of how to get from here to there – and while we are all making our efforts to change our cultures, I am less optimistic than you for the possibilities of substantial change.[131]

Achieving universality may help in partly addressing this problem, but it will not be sufficient. In the social

arena, violence, war, and extremism are error-correction mechanisms. The error is perceived or actual injustice—inequity of access to advantage. The answer is equity of opportunity through universal access to the sources of advantage—to true wealth (explanatory knowledge), but as a contributor, not simply a recipient. If we are unable to achieve and deliver this answer peacefully, if democratic processes fail to provide peaceful and effective error-correction mechanisms to correct such injustices, violence and extremism will step in as alternative mechanisms.

Extremism and exclusion are two sides of the same coin. Extremism obtains its oxygen from isolation—from exclusion. Through deliberate policies that pursue inclusion, aimed at making every citizen a stakeholder in society so that no one stays behind, we can contribute to shared prosperity. Through UBS and similar policy interventions, and with the help of education, we could significantly reduce the likelihood of the emergence of extremism.

Those who are 'inside the tent' consider those who are outside and challenge their narrative as 'extremists.' However, if you care to place yourself in the position of an 'extremist,' they feel excluded (from the tent), do not share the warmth of being in the tent, and look for, believe in, and help propagate alternative narratives (the narratives of 'extremists') which offer a meaningful role for them and benefit them. It is true that communalism

on its own, unsupported by a national governance structure, will not achieve these outcomes. It is precisely the role of broader, national, but genuinely democratic governance institutions to ensure that everyone buys into and becomes a stakeholder in our shared narrative; this is the key message of Michael Sandel (2022) as well.

This is also an answer to the related question that Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) poses in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. By ensuring that no one is left behind and that everybody has access to all basic services while also being assisted to be a stakeholder in the 'wellbeing garden' as well as a productive contributor to maintaining its health, we can help individual morality mitigate social immorality.[132] We can thus encourage individual rationality and morality to translate and transform into communal and social, and possibly even national and international, rationality and morality.

Even then, we need a mechanism for values alignment as a platform for social cohesion, and ways of bridging the possible gap between individual morality and group morality. Education is one tool for achieving this. Ongoing social interaction through creative activities, sports and so on, that is, various ways of living, creating, working, and playing together, offer complementary mechanisms. If all else fails, it may be conceded that some form of force, or the threat of it, may be necessary.

It can be hoped then that human reason and consciousness will be combined to continue exploring and discovering social and political orders that can serve sustainable flourishing while concurrently and deliberately constructing institutions that will prevent the demise of humankind and other living species. Supported by good governance, humans have the capability and opportunity to "create our own world, not according to demonic fantasies, mindless customs, and destructive prejudices, but according to the canons of reason, reflection, and discourse [and empathy] that uniquely belong to our species"[133]—both to enjoy our freedoms and to convert them into sustained flourishing.

> *We are always creating ourselves, always creating the world; we, and the world we live in, are already products of artifice. It is self-cultivation alone that enables us to exceed what we thought we were while remaining fully human. Once we understand what it means to create wisely, we can remain open to all the possibilities that lie before us. Once we recognize how we've already shaped our surroundings, we can take on our role as the only beings in the cosmos who can give pattern and order to the world. Nature out there is the same as nature within. It is something to be worked on, altered, and made much better. We've constructed this world; therefore, we can change it.*[134]

X. Communalism - emergent community life

What kind of social and political order is most conducive to providing and protecting the environment (the *milieu*) for *the Way* to be opened, looked after, expanded, and shared. An environment that liberates the mind in all its capacities, on the one hand, to develop and apply scientific methods to understand the natural order and natural forces, while on the other, to observe and learn from life as it flows, with the purpose of improving human wellbeing in all kinds of creative ways. An environment that embraces and celebrates the diversity of life and plurality of values and thought. One that is open to criticism, learning, and error correction. One that evolves as an outcome of the error correction process.

We are looking for conditions that support the emergence and endurance of diverse communities that are cooperative, egalitarian, creative, and free, as well as living in full harmony with nature. As Ian Scoones (2024, p. 23) expresses it, "an alternative, transformative style of politics must emerge where responses to uncertainty are rooted in forms of solidarity, mutuality and care. This must be inclusive of those who are marginalized, offsetting the dangers of capture by regressive authoritarian populist forces".

I suggest that communalism (Bookchin, 2006) is a representation of these conditions. It is a political embodiment of community organizations that allow and encourage an ongoing process of emergence to proceed uninterrupted in exploring social orders that are aligned with and supportive of *conatus*.

Anarchism

Communalism relates to anarchism in the same way that liberty relates to freedom. Communalism stands for the idea of a wide range of emergent political arrangements that offer fulfilled individual thought and life in diverse social settings. By institutionalizing the core anarchistic principles of non-domination and embracing diversity, it offers the potential of achieving perfect alignment and harmony between the natural, social, and political orders on an ongoing basis.

Communalism offers a political order that is fully aligned with Alfred Whitehead's natural order, embodying democracy of and for all living organisms and providing a platform for creative evolutionary processes, as well as serving as a guarantor of human freedom (unity of freedom).[135] The work of Andreas Chatzidakis and colleagues (2020) is very much in the same spirit. Stefano Mancuso's (2021) *Bill of Rights* for plants would serve equally well as the communalist manifesto for all living beings. Anarchism provides the philosophical foundations for communalism.

The word 'anarchy' has its origin in the Greek word *an-arkhos*—*an* [without], *arkhos* [leader or ruler]—conveying the principle of non-domination in all spheres of life, private and public.[136] As Chomsky (2013) explains, anarchism is based on the basic principle that any form of authority or domination has a burden of proof to bear; it has to demonstrate that it is legitimate. Anarchism is not a political philosophy of social disorder. It embraces democratically generated forms of social order of all sorts—so long as such order is self-imposed (not imposed forcefully from a 'higher authority') and it continues to serve the purpose for which it was created—that is, it has an embedded error-correction mechanism.

Anarchism does not object to the need for leadership in communities. It acknowledges that different circumstances require different forms of leadership. It rejects permanent leadership imposed from the top. It embraces delegated leadership and governance, bottom-up if all such voluntary government arrangements are subject to peaceful change when they lose their legitimacy.

This is, in fact, precisely the juncture we are at right now—the democratic governance and government arrangements that have evolved so far are no longer serving their fundamental purpose and, therefore, have lost their legitimacy. That is the problem we are attempting to address and solve. To paraphrase Sandel (2022), we are exploring governance arrangements at all levels of

governance that empower citizens as participants in a shared public life; that is what we have lost.

Dwight Macdonald:

> *The revolutionary alternative to the status quo today is not collectivized property administered by a 'workers' state' whatever that means, but some kind of anarchist decentralization that will break up mass society into small communities where individuals can live together as variegated human beings instead of as impersonal units in the mass sum. The shallowness of the New Deal and the British Labor Party's post-war regime is shown by their failure to improve any of the important things in people's lives – the actual relationships on the job, the way they spend their leisure, and childrearing and sex and art. It is mass living that vitiates all these today, and the State that holds together the status quo. [...] Anarchism leads back to the individual and the community, which is 'impractical' but necessary; that is to say, it is revolutionary.*[137]

In terms of the evolution of diverse types of political order, there is an interesting parallel here with isonomia (or no rule), the origins of which Kojin Karatani (2017) traces to Ionia around the seventh century BCE. Anarchism-inspired political orders are based on the principle of equal freedom of all. To the question of which equality we should strive for, an anarchist replies, "The equality of freedom for all." This is fully aligned with the unity of freedom that Isaiah Berlin champions. Thus,

anarchism and isonomia offer a potential resolution to the tension between inequality and freedom.[138]

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's anarchist order provides a perfect complement to Whitehead's natural order. Proudhon conceptualizes anarchism as mutuality or cooperation without hierarchy or state rule.[139] The anarchist social order is one of a community of free and responsible people whose freedom is as large as possible, constrained only by others' freedoms. One cannot increase one's sphere of freedom against the will and at the expense of others, including non-human beings.

Indeed, "Anarchism… seeks in social life what appears to operate in nature: the call for self-management in society mirrors the self-regulation and self-organization of nature itself".[140] Citing John Locke (1690), he draws a parallel between a universe without a meddling God and a society without a meddling state (as distinct from genuinely democratic self-government), where people live according to reason as well as their consciousness, without a common superior on earth to judge or order them around.[141] To be effective and enduring, social order should emerge from the ground up through the voluntary association of equally free individuals (i.e., through self-government) and not be imposed from above by an external power (such as the state). Anarchist organizations are non-hierarchical, decentralized, participatory, and cooperative.

There are many currents of anarchism, but "they are not mutually exclusive and all flow in the great river of freedom."[142] Their unifying value is the equality of freedom for all—the rejection of authority, hierarchy, and domination to allow individuals and communities the freedom to pursue the lives they value. There is an infinite variety of valued lives. The unity offered by anarchism is the unity in diversity. No one path is paramount. There are many paths to the top of the mountain.[143]

Against that background of unity of value, the anarchist social order provides an ideal environment for the flourishing of human freedom as well as offering sustained protection for it—a perfect platform for the emancipation of reason and consciousness and their channeling to support the survival and thriving of humans and other living species through the ongoing creation and correction (i.e., improvement) of generalized knowledge.[144]

Communalism

Communalism, according to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, is "a theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely bound in a federation."[145]

Bookchin's communalism is a proposal to operate anarchism in a social context. From anarchism, communalism "draws its commitment to antistatism and confederalism, as well as its recognition that hierarchy is a

basic problem that can be overcome only by a libertarian socialist society."[146] Municipal communities democratically plan and manage their affairs through popular assembly. This democratic deliberation purposefully promotes autonomy and self-reliance, as opposed to centralized state politics.

In a 2001 interview, Bookchin summarized his views this way: the overriding problem is to change the structure of society so that people gain power; the best arena to do that is the municipality—the city, town, and village—where we have an opportunity to create a face-to-face democracy.[147] Communalism seeks to radically restructure cities' governing institutions into popular democratic assemblies based on neighborhoods, towns, and villages. In these popular assemblies, citizens—including the middle classes as well as the working classes—deal with community affairs on a face-to-face basis, making policy decisions in direct democracy and giving reality to the ideal of a humanistic, rational society.[148] These autonomous municipal communities connect via confederations. To address problems and issues that transcend the boundaries of a single municipality, in turn, the democratized municipalities should join to form a broader confederation.[149]

Communalism potentially addresses the challenge posed by the scale of modern society through the organizational structure of federalism. [150] In doing so, it acknowledges the fundamental problems of ineffective-

ness and inefficiency associated with community-centered governance aspirations, highlighted by Slavoj Žižek (2016), offering a potential practical solution to it.

Bookchin proposes the affinity group as a cell of the new society.[151] Affinity groups should only act as catalysts and not take a vanguard or leadership role. While remaining autonomous and local, they can federate by means of local, regional, and national assemblies.[152] Affinity groups and the confederations they are linked up with will be formed and be centered on different groups in society (youth, elderly, disabled, various ethnicities, business groups, scientists, engineers, or mixtures of some or all of the above) depending on the issues or common interests at hand. This potential solution aspires to bring together the effectiveness and efficiency of devolved government with the emancipation provided by diverse communities.

Politics should be "conceived as the civic arena and the institutions by which people democratically and directly manage the community affairs."[153] Thus, the 'picture of success' offered by communalism is a confederation of self-governing communes[154]—a nationwide confederation of cities and towns to replace the republican nation-state. This can be enabled and supported by technologies such as Elon Musk's 'digital town squares,' thus also encouraging and enabling global (virtual) communities of interest to be formed.

The confederation of municipalities, as a medium for interaction, collaboration, and mutual aid among its municipal components, offers an alternative to the powerful nation-state on the one hand and the parochial town or city on the other. Fully democratic, in which the municipal deputies to confederal institutions would be subject to recall, rotation, and unrelenting public review, the confederation would constitute an extension of local liberties to the regional level, allowing for a sensitive balance between locality and region in which the cultural variety of towns could flourish without turning inward toward local exclusivity. Indeed, beneficial cultural traits would also be shared within and between various confederations, along with the interchange of goods and services that make up the material means of life.

Communalism also offers the promise of allowing, encouraging, and supporting the creation of value in its broadest sense (material and non-material) without compromising freedom. In addition, it aspires to break the link between the creation and ownership of material wealth on the one hand, which is extremely productive and should be supported, and power, influence, and domination over other human beings and communities at large on the other.

Just as there are two types of knowledge, explanatory and non-explanatory, there are two types of wealth: the

type we wish would influence political decisions and social life (i.e., explanatory knowledge) and the type we do not (i.e., material, including financial wealth). We welcome the growth of both types of wealth so long as they work and add value within their proper domains. Communalism embraces all the above, offering a welcoming environment for inclusive wealth creation.

If a society is to be capable of making life not only vastly enjoyable for its members but also leisurely enough that they can engage in the intellectual and cultural self-cultivation that is necessary for creating civilization and vibrant political life, it must not denigrate technology and science but bring them into accord with visions of human happiness and leisure. Let there be no doubt that the technological resources that make it possible for people to choose their lifestyles and have the free time to participate fully in democratic politics are necessary for a libertarian, confederally organized society.

Communalism is a political order that offers the promise of liberating individuals and communities from the weight (i.e., the power) of the state, the bureaucracy, and the monopoly capital under which they are buried.[155] Communalism also offers a promising social platform for embracing diversity and, in so doing, liberating individuals and their traditional close-knit communities from the trappings of established patterns of thinking, behaving, and living. In thus encouraging the adoption of broader and longer-term perspectives in making

choices, it helps align the social order with the natural order, providing a bridge to resilience and sustainable flourishing.

The natural order is characterized by collaborative, mutually supporting, creative, non-dominant processes. As a political order, communalism is fully aligned with the natural order as just described. It promotes and supports sustainable life for all living organisms, human and non-human, in a milieu characterized by non-domination and mutual support. It also accords with Whitehead's dream of a fully aligned natural and social order being pulled, in total harmony, in the direction of an 'attractor' that is characterized by greater freedom, complexity, creativity, and mutuality—i.e., toward goodness and beauty.

Devesh Rustagi (2024) provides some evidence in support of the claim that self-governance, which is what communalism represents, tends to support cooperation and prosocial behaviors. Thus, communalism is fully aligned with the three attributes of *conatus*, delivered to human beings in a social setting, survival, safety and security, and flourishing.

Communalism versus localism

Communalism is not our current state, not our starting point. We are where we are, and we need to build to-

ward communalism deliberately, cautiously, and peacefully from this starting point without in any way assuming that we will achieve it. This is in full alignment with Dewey's perspective. Dewey did not believe in an ideal end state, taking the current state of a social and political organization instead as a given and arguing that changes can only be made here and there in a piecemeal fashion as the current situation allows, with small changes aggregating over time, but with no guarantee that history is moving us toward a 'good attractor'.

A commitment to *localism* would provide a promising steppingstone toward *communalism*. In the next chapter, I provide some evidence for such commitment. Rajan (2019) describes localism as "the process of decentralizing power to the local level so that people feel more empowered in their communities. The community, rather than the nation, will become a possible vehicle for ethnic cohesiveness and cultural continuity."[156] The underlying core principle is that of subsidiarity: powers should stay at the most decentralized level consistent with their effective use—but who decides?

The answer to that last question, who decides, underpins the difference between communalism and localism, the authorizing environment or process for community voice and ownership. It is the direction of devolution that defines the fundamental difference between the two. Under communalism, devolution is from the bottom (the communities) toward larger representative

bodies (assemblies). The community is the origin and starting point. Communities authorize, as required, the establishment of regional and national assemblies to represent them. All combined administrative arrangements and federations deliberately created to serve a combination of communities (say, in a city, region, or nationally) are intended to exploit economies of scale and scope, thus ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of delivery of shared services without compromising equity and being free of domination of any sort. These regional and national organizations also serve as centers of expertise and information.

In contrast, under localism, devolution is from the center (say, national parliament) toward regional authorities (such as regional governance bodies). If the principle of subsidiarity acts as a guiding principle of governance, the center may choose to selectively devolve governance and management rights for the provision of some services to communities and regions as well as allocating resources to support such devolution, based on its own criteria. Legislative power resides with central governance bodies. Local governance and government institutions serve as instruments of central government policy.

It is hoped, for the sake of a peaceful transition, that such transformations use existing governance structures as a departure platform. Communalism, which embraces non-domination as a core principle, does not renunciate

the organized defense of life, freedom, and rightful property. It accepts and supports such organization on a voluntary basis as a self-evident precondition for these outcomes. That is, existing governance structures would be acceptable if all privileges, monopolies, and oligopolies were removed from their constitutions and practice, accepting equal freedom of all as their basic law.[157]

To take a concrete example, in principle, communalism is not hostile to the use of market processes to share relevant commercial information as well as coordinated consumption and production activities through the market-price mechanism. In most cases, markets do that extremely well—when they are not captured and manipulated by concentrated commercial powers in the form of monopolies and oligopolies or distorted by various information deficiencies.[158] In cases of such distortions, market mechanisms need to be supported by appropriate government interventions to address and attempt to correct such distortions.

To state it differently and in a complementary way, competition in all walks of life, including economic life, is most welcome and indeed it represents a very productive mode of social cooperation, provided, of course, that it takes place under the rules of the game deliberately structured to direct such cooperation toward achieving shared and sustainable well-being for all living creatures.

There are additional critical questions surrounding the moral and ethical dimensions of what decisions, the production and distribution of which goods and services, should and should not be devolved into commercial market mechanisms.[159] In principle, these conversations can be conducted under the light of reason, paving the way for a gradual, peaceful transition to communalism.

Advocating communalism and my optimism regarding its emergence does not reflect a yearning for an idyllic past, whatever the credibility of the evidence may be in support of its existence. It is a conjecture that communalism will emerge propagated by the force of *conatus*.

I conjecture that the forces that drive us towards Theilhard's, Kipler's and Deutsch's Omega points or their equivalents – the explosion of explanatory knowledge which will eventually be captured by a mega brain in the form of a universal computer, or even a universal mind, are the same forces (the life forces) that underpin the emergence of communalism as well.

XI. Optimism

Life is lived in social, community settings. Both suffering and flourishing are experienced within the environment created by these settings. The critical question is, what are the social and political conditions that will support flourishing and minimize suffering – and will these conditions emerge naturally. The ultimate foundation for my optimism is the conjecture that the conditions that support flourishing will emerge, propagated by the force of *conatus*.

The question that must be addressed is why we should have any confidence at all that the path to communalism and/or political orders with similar attributes will emerge, and that we will persist in pursuing them. What could be an explanation underpinning such optimism.

After all, we have not lacked the wisdom on how to reduce human suffering. As examples, consider the paths laid out 2500 years ago by Gotama, the Buddha, and the Chinese thinker Laozi (teacher of the *Dao*—The Way). When looking for threads that unite their perspectives, they can be found in the shared outcomes their paths were leading to—bringing disorder and suffering to an end. They both were trying to create worlds where humans could flourish. They were exploring paths to social orders that would support the sustainable well-being of all beings, human and non-human. However, these paths have not been taken so far.

Optimism

Usually, optimism is associated with the prediction that the best will happen, or probably will, and pessimism with the prediction that the worst will happen. My optimism is not associated with a prediction of any particular outcome. Rather, following David Deutsch,[160] my optimism here relates, first and foremost, to the potential, the infinite potential that creative human minds collectively offer to flourish. It is supported by an explanation of the forces that will lead to the path (*The Way*) that will keep the ongoing creation of explanatory knowledge, and channels of creativity open and expanding—based on human nature and founded on freedom, diversity, and autonomy (universality).

Here, optimism relates exclusively to keeping *the Way* open in the service of the ongoing life process of problem-solving—motivated by *conatus*. In principle, we have access to all the natural laws through the creativity of our minds. If we can protect our freedom, embrace diversity, and welcome criticism, those who attempt to control the life process by obstructing open-ended human creativity will always be at a disadvantage.

My optimism is based on the conjecture that communalism is an emergent property of complex social and political processes when diversity, freedom, autonomy, and explanatory knowledge coexist. It is fully aligned with human nature (*conatus*), the human drive to survive, keep safe, and flourish.

As stressed in earlier parts of this book, an evolutionary process can have a purpose without an overall plan or plot driving it. Communalism will emerge to solve a problem, the problem of centralized/dominant power that blocks the path to a social evolutionary process to support *conatus*—that is, the inherent purpose of communalism.

In support of this conjecture, I will explain the forces and the processes supporting this emergence, irrespective of whether those in power are willing to pursue governance arrangements to support such an evolution deliberately. Of course, we can get there through deliberate governance as well. The burden of my argument is to explain that forces supporting the emergence of communalism will be activated irrespective of whether such governance arrangements are forthcoming or not.

Explanation and supporting evidence

The main obstacle to social progress is both the availability and the unequal distribution of opportunities for, and the liberty to use our creative minds, to support human flourishing. As more knowledge accumulates using our creative minds, and technology assists with its use to connect communities and provide alternatives to current structures and supporting institutions, disrupting current power bases in the process, this problem too will be gradually solved.

Critically, with the help of technology, the use of improving explanatory knowledge for the benefit of human beings at large no longer depends on the benevolence of powerful states. That is precisely why optimism applies at all scales of community or society—local, regional, national, and international. This is in full alignment with the concept of multi-level selection (MLS) that David Sloan Wilson and his collaborators associate with 'general Darwinism'. MLS "tells us that functional organization can evolve at any level of a multi-tier hierarchy of units, such as from small groups to global governance in human cultural systems, but only when special conditions are met. When these conditions are not met, then adaptations that evolve at smaller scales become disruptive at larger scales."[161]

Current governance institutions will buckle under the pressure of the worsening circumstances permeating the world, forced by human nature (i.e., *conatus*) and supported by the combination of freedom, diversity, autonomy, and knowledge. They will succumb to the pressure emanating from the consensus that has been unleashed by the pain, suffering, and injustices identified there, aided by the power of technology to dramatically magnify, globalize, and concentrate this pressure, thus increasing its impact.

In that same vein, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014) discussed what is needed to bring about social and political

change, asking how so many communist governments of the twentieth century, despite almost total control of their populations, fell in the face of popular uprisings. His answer is human 'consciousness'—the ability to organize one's own previous experience to imagine existing alternatives to reality—which is the basis of autonomous action. He argues that governments that do not do enough to help people achieve what (they think) will make them happy risk falling in similar ways. Good governance, he says, consists of promoting the conditions that allow consciousness to flourish: freedom to hear and express the truth; hope—societal goals to which citizens can aspire; and enjoyable activities—not just pleasant distractions but experiences that allow challenge and mastery of skills, and ultimately the experience of 'flow'—the concept of losing oneself in an appropriately challenging creative task.[162]

Emerging 'global neighborhoods' defined not only by geography but also by shared values and interests, supported by technology, will provide increasingly loud and effective voices outside the prevailing institutions of governance and government, undermining the foundations as well as the legitimacy of the latter. In response, these existing governance and government structures will either reimagine and reinvent themselves as allies of these communities, serving as their effective representatives, or vanish. In other words, and to address the challenge that Niebuhr (1932) posed in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, individual morality will

mitigate social immorality because it will be in the self-interest of corporate and political groups, aligned with their desire to survive (*conatus*, again), to respond positively to the demands of individuals and communities for support, to live the lives they value.

This is the political image of the economic processes and outcomes described and predicted by Schumpeter (1942, 1954) with respect to his concept of 'creative destruction'. In response to the innovations introduced to economic life by entrepreneurs that upset the order and power balance of the day radically,

> *The old enterprises... have three options: either to disappear, if for personal or objective reasons they cannot be adapted; or to fold up their sails and try to live in a position that is now modest; or finally, of their own accord or with the help of others, either to change economic branch, or according to the new circumstances, to pass to other technical or commercial arrangements, which in many cases amounts to an extension of the production.*[163]

In the same vein, wise governance, one that embraces diversity and wishes to nourish the potential for versatility that it offers, will acknowledge the need to reimagine itself because with increasing diversity comes the realization that no form of central government will be accepted as an agent for the community. To use economics jargon, there are diseconomies of both scale and scope for central governance and government from increasing

diversity as a foundation for versatility and, hence, resilience. I use gardening in the spirit of stewardship as a metaphor for such wise governance. Existing governance institutions will have to adapt and adjust simply to serve their *conatus* (the instinct to try to survive and hold on to power).[164]

Transformative change

Current governance and government arrangements are not fit for purpose, the fundamental purpose of promoting the wellbeing of all living organisms on a sustainable basis. Many of the answers that people used to expect from central and local governments are now being looked for, within communities.

In a recent study, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development[165] noted that in democracies, the main instrument for the public to hold the government and parliament accountable is free and fair elections. However, people no longer necessarily believe that they can influence politics through the electoral system. In 2023, a majority (53%) believed that the political system did not allow people like them to have a say, and those who felt they did not have a political voice tended to have low trust in the government. This is a call to action for governments to rethink processes of participation and representation that are at the heart of democracy.

One should add to this list the loss of confidence in the ability of extant institutional arrangements to deliver the environmental, social, political, and economic outcomes (the enablers) that are essential for individuals and their communities to live the diverse lives they value, and loss of faith in those who have been entrusted with the responsibility to achieve this. We are all in deep trouble, and that includes our democracy when the people at large lose confidence in the role of the government to act in their best interests. That is precisely where we are right now.

A social order that offers the possibility, the promise, of addressing the wellbeing problem cannot be created through bloody revolutions. Bloody revolutions never serve anyone except those who seek power to promote their interests. As the German anarchist Landauer (2010) expressed it, if the state is serving the interests of a select few, the powerful, it "is not something which can be destroyed by a [bloody, violent] revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behavior; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently".[166]

The challenge is to identify new forms of organization for those functions that the state now fulfills through bureaucracy and the exercise of authority. Communalism offers such an alternative; the question is whether and, if so, how we may transition to it.

Karl Popper again:

> *The greatest of all revolutions is the transition from the 'closed society' to the 'open society', an association of free individuals respecting each other's rights within the framework of mutual protection supplied by the state, and achieving, through the making of responsible, rational decisions, a growing measure of humane and enlightened life.*[167]

The types of pressure outlined, aided by technology, may well provide the catalyst for such a transition to open societies.

Obstacles and catalysts for change – evidence of progress

Obstacles are not barriers; they are problems—and problems are soluble.[168] Is there any evidence to support my optimism about tendencies and trends toward *the Way*—toward removing the obstacles to opening *the Way* for everyone?

The good news, somewhat supportive of my optimism, is that since the *Enlightenment*, with the liberation of the creative human mind and the challenge it posed to the domination of authority, religion, tradition, ideology and so on, there has been an absolute explosion in explanatory knowledge and other outcomes of creativity

that, eventually, combined with technology and institutions, has generated a tremendous improvement in the material and non-material living conditions of all human beings, rich and poor. It has also resulted in louder voices and democratic rights for citizens at large. As always, this solution has generated further problems by creating other expectations. The current problem we are attempting to address is whether this democratization process is meeting the current expectations and aspirations of people, and the answer is "No."

In response, some younger people are extremely active and vociferous, certainly in the environmental movement. Direct engagements with communities at the grassroots level are gradually replacing traditional democratic processes (such as voting in elections). Self-identifying communities are popping up everywhere, aided by technology to connect people around the world. This provides a vehicle, and an alternative means for young people to fulfill their devotion to the principle of expressing themselves, of doing their own things in their own ways, of not caring what other people may say, everybody for themself, but in a cohesive social (hopefully global) setting.

Among action painters, for example, or among various sorts of political rebels, the idea is not to conform to some kind of pattern that has been invented for you but simply to live the kind of life that is born of your inner dreams and imagination. Everyone who tries to prevent

you from doing that is in some way suffocating you, boxing you in, trying to prevent that which is human in you from realizing itself freely and spontaneously.[169]

This is sometimes construed as a threat to democracy. In fact, it is completely the opposite. It stands for a great push toward real democracy (participative and radical democracy[170]), global democracy, and the beginning of a peaceful global revolution.

One would expect central government and public service arms of the state, as well as big business, to initially resist a movement toward such a global social order, seeing this as an erosion of their power base. Traditional governance institutions at local, regional, and national levels can, over time, evolve toward the local, regional, and national assemblies that communalism envisages. It will be in their self-interest to do so; otherwise, they will become increasingly irrelevant and perish. The great news is that there are signs that this is precisely what is happening.

There are many precedents to such dynamics in the interface between pressures on existing powers and social movements. A very famous one is the establishment of the foundations of the welfare state in Germany in the late 19th century—the 'Bismarck model.'

> *It was instituted by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck at the end of the nineteenth century and was based on the idea of insuring workers against a variety*

> *of risks – those associated with illness, work-related accidents, old age, and disability – on the condition that they paid into the insurance fund. These laws were promulgated while the first labor unions were coming into existence in Germany, and Bismarck sought to undermine radical socialist alternatives by providing workers with protections. In other words, the political leaders' perception of a threat to their power already played a role in their motivation to establish a welfare state.*[171]

A more recent case in point is the begrudging support provided to emerging technologies underpinning digital assets by both central and private banks.[172] The Monetary Authority of Singapore is strongly supporting the emergence of the 'digital asset ecosystem' on the grounds that it can potentially facilitate more efficient transactions, enhance financial inclusion, and unlock economic value—provided it has control over the evolution of these and associated technologies. This offers another example of established governance bodies (in this case, in the financial system) choosing to play a facilitator and supporter role for a communalist-spirited emergent technology, which it did not initiate, in order not to lose control of the governance of the financial system at large.

Another example, again from Singapore,[173] relates to the attempts of the government to apply a top-down approach to developing national identity and shared values[174] based on the "traditional Asian ideas of morality,

duty and society" to counter the growing exposure to Western lifestyles and ideologies, especially the threat of westernized individualism. Initially, starting in the late 1980s, these values were developed by following top-down processes. However, in response to a gradual groundswell of public sentiment about the need for broader engagement, the government launched an initiative in 2012 known as the *Our Singapore Conversation* to interact with Singaporeans on an unprecedented scale. Over 47,000 Singaporeans participated in more than 660 dialogue sessions—both online and in-person or through surveys—over one year to articulate their views and aspirations.

The national Singapore conversation continues today as the government engages Singaporeans and uses more varied formats, such as social media and mobile apps, to conduct broad-based discussions and gather feedback about pertinent issues. Singapore's national identity is constantly evolving with the country's changing demographics, generational shifts, and renewed mindsets about national values and aspirations. The makeup of the population has changed significantly in recent decades, driven by an aging population, shrinking birth rates and immigration policy changes. All these factors have, in turn, profoundly influenced the way Singaporeans view themselves as citizens of the nation they call home.

It is remarkably interesting and relevant to note that under pressure from increasing diversity and demands for active engagement by the population at large, the Singapore government has decided to shift from a top-down to a more collaborative approach in shaping and reshaping these national values. An alternative approach was adopted by Wales, in developing its national values, with a specific focus on the wellbeing of future generations, starting with a community-based approach from the very beginning.[175]

There is also a renewal of interest in progressive municipalism around the world, which is very similar in both spirit and practice to communalism. This encouraging development is documented in *The Care Manifesto* (Chatzidakis et al. 2020). Colin Ward (2018) also provides numerous examples of 'anarchy in action'.

Taiwan's digital democracy is another sign of progress.

> *Taiwan's digital democracy can be seen as a precursor in this regard. On the country's online platform, join.gov.tw, anyone can file a petition. There is no need to be affiliated with any political party. Twice a month, for petitions that gather 5,000 signatures, we hold face-to-face collaborative meetings across related ministries to explore ways to incorporate them into policymaking. In this way, even those who are too young to vote can nevertheless have a way to start a movement and set a norm.*[176]

In his recent book, *Another World is Possible,* Sir Geoff Mulgan (2022) gives many other examples of how technology is enabling social imagination to be converted into actions and initiatives to enhance democracy and improve social life, nourished and supported by freedom.

In a similar vein, in the New Zealand context, Nick Clark (2024) suggested that one way of strengthening democratic oversight in local governance and government would be to let voters have a direct say on big decisions, such as rate increases or major infrastructure projects. When councils want to start major projects, they need to hold a public vote (referendum) to get approval. This would give local communities more control over important decisions that affect them. While referenda traditionally involved paper ballots and were expensive to run, modern online voting systems would make this more practical and affordable. Using electronic media, local or regional councils would need to provide clear, understandable information about what they are proposing and what it would cost. After all, most people have mobile phones these days, so electronic voting should be reasonably straightforward. This could also help reverse the downward trend in electoral participation in local elections.

These are some examples of new forms of organization emerging to perform those functions that the state now fulfills through bureaucracy. If the state is not serving

the interests of the broader public, including future generations, an effective and peaceful response would be to ignore its institutions and create other ways of serving the public. This offers one option for destroying the old that is no longer fit for purpose so that the new may emerge.

There are even signs that current public governance arrangements are changing. There are two major traditions relating to public governance. The old governance model envisages steering by the national government (i.e., the state) from the top down. In contrast, the new governance model focuses more on how the center interacts with society and encourages and supports self-steering in networks. These networks include central and local entities, scientists, businesses, the young and the elderly, representatives of all genders and ethnicities, NGOs and others.

It seems like we are gradually moving toward a new governance model. Central to the emergence of such new governance models is the realization that,

> *It is no longer relevant or acceptable for public sector leaders to promote, let alone deploy, the concept of benevolent municipalism in which the 'great and good' believe they know what's best for the citizen. Hierarchical power is, rightly, giving way to networked authority the roots of which are firmly in the community. We do not exist in our own right. The political leadership is elected, and the officers are appointed by the democratically*

> *mandated. We are all here to serve others – and that is the only kind of power we are entitled to wield: we rule only in order to serve.*[177]

Peter McKinlay (2022) provides plenty of evidence, primarily from Anglo-Saxon countries, to support the claim that a transition to the 'new governance' model is indeed in progress. One of the most encouraging examples of the evolution of local governance and government toward community governance is provided by the gradual transformation of local government in Wiltshire in the UK.[178] This is a great example of devolved community governance in action. These examples, and several others discussed in detail by Scoones (2024), demonstrate that these changes are taking place, that they are effective, that localism is gradually evolving toward governance arrangements that are reflective of the spirit of communalism, and that this can all happen bottom up—it does not have to be initiated by existing governance bodies although the latter do eventually support it because providing such support is aligned with their *conatus*.

Final word – staying on the path toward the Way

Discovering a path to sustainable flourishing does not guarantee that humankind will seek it and once discovered, keep traveling on it. We need to remind ourselves of the very last words of Gotama, the Buddha, speaking to his closest followers who surrounded his deathbed: 'Things fall apart; tread the path with care.'[179]

Traditional pessimism is right in that civilization has no guaranteed future—nor does our species. The overwhelming majority of civilizations and species that have ever existed are now extinct—including, significantly, every one of our cousin species—every species that has tried to survive by creating knowledge that was not in their genome—new explanatory knowledge—how to make clothes, fire, farming—and to live the new ways of life that they enabled. That is our biological niche—to survive through the exercise of creativity—and we are the last species left in that niche. For such species, status is not available. We conquer problems by creating knowledge, or they conquer us. So, there is nothing new in our current situation of all sorts of existential threats or dangers. It is undeniable that the worst can happen because the very worst has already happened many times. In short, progress (i.e., ongoing flourishing) is possible but not inevitable. Consider also the contrasting examples of Athens and Sparta in this context.[180]

Thus, the optimism I offer and explain in this book is conditional; it comes with a critical warning. It is contingent on the protection of freedom and the embrace of diversity, as well as being open to criticism, as foundations for the creation, dissemination, ongoing correction, and productive use of explanatory knowledge, that is, true wealth. This is the type of wealth that can be easily made available to humanity at large; it can be democratized through its embodiment in technology and institutions—by ensuring that its enablers are broadly shared.

If there is universal access to the enablers of knowledge creation (i.e., universality), then everyone will be able to contribute to it and thereby be a direct beneficiary of it.[181] Thus, we would all have a stake in the game, which provides a strong incentive to achieve stability and prosperity. Wars, violence, and extremism are all error-correction mechanisms when democratic reason and compromise-based mechanisms fail—the 'error' being the real or perceived injustice associated with exclusion (of not being in the tent). As Laozi taught us 2500 years ago, "Give evil nothing to oppose, and it will disappear by itself."[182]

I therefore have one message for the people who choose to read this book, especially for the young. Take your responsibility to protect your freedoms seriously, and do so with determination, passion and vigilance, and embrace diversity and criticism as sources of creativity and error correction. Life will not only go on, but it will flourish as well—for the benefit of everyone.

That is precisely why, as human beings, we have agency, which gives us the capability as well as the moral imperative to protect liberty, thereby contributing to social order. This corresponds to and complements the natural capability and imperative of the human mind, as an integral part of the natural order, to help nature understand itself.

It is in this very sense that if you love life, you will appreciate that the greatest evil, the greatest source of immorality, is to limit the freedom to generate, share, and productively use knowledge and exclude people from having access to the enablers of such knowledge creation. By succumbing to that evil, you would be frustrating the inclusive creation of the distinctive wealth that only human beings, using their minds, can create toward sustaining and improving life, their own lives as well as those of the communities to which they belong—explanatory knowledge.[183] Such inclusivity is the greatest contributor to actualizing the potential that each unique human mind offers as the creator of explanatory knowledge and a foundation for shared prosperity and ongoing social cohesion.

XII. Closing the Circle

We have come full circle. Starting with suffering and despair, ending with optimism – all grounded in human nature.

The beginning is the preciousness of life – despite suffering. An almost universal desire to hold on to it, whatever life throws at you.

Then, for those who refuse to believe or escape, follows a diverse search for meaning – for flourishing in the face of hopelessness.

The source of flourishing is knowledge and creativity, sourced from the uniqueness of each human being.

Human life is almost universally lived in community settings – and creative processes occur in communities.

The foundations of community life are shared values and cohesion.

Knowledge creation and creativity find fertile ground in diversity, freedom, autonomy, liberty, and harmony. This is the ground that offers the potential to convert the uniqueness of human minds to a collective force for 'good'.

Human nature, its drive to survive, feel safe and secure, and flourish, provides the force behind the emergence of these as 'attractors' for emergent social processes.

We are not looking for a specific, static, predetermined outcome or destination. This is not a search for *the* truth, *the* good life or a predefined end, utopia. Life is a flow; it is an open, endless process of problem-solving. It is an ongoing struggle to survive and thrive, faced with unknown and unknowable challenges. There is no permanent win; life is an endless struggle. We must continue to imagine, create, and apply new tools that embody improved explanatory knowledge to address these challenges through collective, peaceful collaboration.

Life's need to survive will establish order in the universe – both natural and social order. (Tipler, 1994)

References

Abreu, Maria; Comim, Flavio; Jones, Calvin (2022). "A capability-approach perspective on levelling up," *SocArXiv Papers*. August. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/qjau5

Acemoglu, Daron (2019). "Why a Universal Basic Income is a Bad Idea," *Project Syndicate.* 7 June.

Acemoglu, Daron; Johnson, Simon; Robinson, James A. (2005). "Institutions as A Fundamental Cause of Long-run Growth," in: P. Aghion and S. N. Durlauf, eds. *Handbook of Economic Growth*, 1, 385–472. Elsevier.

Acemoglu, Daron and Robinson, James A (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty.* Profile Books.

Acemoglu, Daron and Robinson, James A (2019). *The Narrow Corridor: How Nations Struggle for Liberty*. Penguin Books.

Acemoglu, Daron and Robinson, James A (2023). *Our thousand-year struggle over technology and prosperity*. Basic Books.

Aghion, Philippe; Antonin, Céline; Bunel, Simon (2021). *The Power of Creative Destruction: Economic upheaval and the wealth of nations.* (Translated by Jodie Cohen-Tanugi). Harvard University Press.

Airos, Maija; Ahlqvist, Toni; Knudsen, Mikkel; Mutanen, Anu; Rapeli, Lauiri; Schauman, Jonas; Setälä, Maija; Taskinen, Mari; Taylor, Amos (2022). "Strengthening foresight and the role of future generations in Finnish lawmaking," *Policy Brief*. 2022:33. Prime Minister's Office, Finland.

Alkire, Sabina (2002). *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/019 9245797.003.0001

Anheier, Helmut K; Knudsen, Edward L; Saraceno, Joseph C (2024) "Is Democracy Really in Retreat?" *Project Syndicate* (*PS on Sunday*), 23 August.

Arendt, Hannah (1958). *The Human Condition.* Chicago University Press.

Arendt, Hannah (1960). "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," *Chicago Review.* Vol 14, pp. 28-46. https://doi.org/10.2307/25293600.

Atkins, Paul W B; Wilson, David Sloan; Hayes, Steven C (2019). *Prosocial: Using Evolutionary Science to Build Productive, Equitable, and Collaborative Groups.* New Harbinger Publications.

Azan, Louis (2022). "The Romantic Conception of the Entrepreneur in Schumpeter's Thought", *LEFMI Working Paper*, series #4; hal-04084 445.

Bakunin, Mikhail (1871). "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," preamble to the second part of *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*.

Bakunin, Mikhail (1990) (2002). *Statism and Anarchy*. (Translated and edited by Marshall S. Shatz.) Cambridge University Press.

Banerjee, Abhijit V. and Duflo, Esther (2011). *Poor Economics*. Penguin Books.

Banerjee, Abhijit V. and Duflo, Esther (2019). *Good Economics for Hard Times*. London: Penguin Books.

Batchelor, Stephen (2015). *After Buddhism: rethinking the dharma for a secular age*. Yale University Press.

Batchelor, Stephen. *Reflections on the eightfold path*—https://tricycle.org/article/eightfold-path

Beinhocker, Eric D (2004). "Where Does Wealth Come From? A Complexity Economics Perspective." Moderator: Dr Ralph Dum, European Commission. YouTube recording, 26 April 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXkjXnok2Tk

Beinhocker, Eric D (2007). *The Origin of Wealth: Evolution, Complexity, and the Radical Remaking of Economics*. Century-Trade.

Beinhocker, Eric D (2016). "How the Profound Changes in Economics Make Left versus Right Debates Irrelevant." *Evonomics*. 26 May.

Benjamin, Walter (1940). *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Essay. PDF. https://seansturm.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/benjamin-theses-on-the-philosophy-of-history.pdf

Bergson, Henri (1911). *Creative Evolution*. Macmillan.

Berlin, Isaiah (2002). *Liberty* (incorporating 'Four Essays on Liberty') (edited by Henry Hardy). Oxford University Press.

Berlin, Isaiah (1965). "Six lectures on romanticism," *Romanticism – Isaiah Berlin*. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhP9EhPApKE_9uxkmfSIt2JJK6oKbXmd-. (15 January 2025)

Berlin, Isaiah (1972). "Roots of Romanticism," interview with Graham Martin, for the Open University; first broadcast in October 1972, Radio 4 (Open University).

Berlin, Isaiah (1999). *The Roots of Romanticism*. Princeton University Press.

Berlin, Isaiah (2013). *The Hedgehog and the Fox – an essay on Tolstoy's view of history*. Princeton University Press.

Berlin, Isaiah (1952). *Freedom and its Betrayal: Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyacNbW9XWo. (15 January 2025)

Berlin, Isaiah (2014). *Freedom and its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. (Updated Edition). Henry Hardy (Editor), Enrique Krause (Foreword). (The lectures that comprise *Freedom and its Betrayal* were delivered in 1952.) Princeton University Press.

Bernstein, Richard J. (2002). *Radical Evil: A philosophical interrogation*. Polity.

Bernstein, Richard J. (2010). *The Pragmatic Turn*. Polity.

Bernstein, Richard J. (2013). "The Pragmatic Turn," *Beloit College Lecture*. 13 February.

Bernstein, Richard J. (2020). *Pragmatic Naturalism: John Dewey's living legacy*. Kindle Edition.

Boix, Carles and Posner, Daniel N (1998). "Social Capital: Explaining its Origins and Effects on Government Performance," *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 28, Issue #4, October.

Bookchin, Murray (1991). "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview," https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-libertarian-municipalism-an-overview

Bookchin, Murray (2006). *Social Ecology and Communalism*. AK Press.

Bookchin, Murray (2015). *The Next Revolution – Popular Assemblies & The Promise of Direct Democracy*. Verso.

Bookchin, Murray (2020). *Free Cities: Communalism and the Left*. Edited by Eirik Eiglad. Libcom.org.

Bregman, Rutger (2020). *Humankind: A Hopeful History*. Bloomsbury.

Brunnermeier, Markus K. (2021). *The Resilient Society*. Endeavor Literary Press.

Camus, Albert (1942). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Gallimard, Paris.

Canto-Sperber, Monique (2019). *La fin des libertés: Comment refonder le libéralisme*. Robert Laffon.

Carattini, Stefano and Roesti, Matthias (2020). "Trust, Happiness, and Pro-Social Behavior," *CESifo Working Papers*. No. 8562, September.

Carlin, Wendy and Bowles, Samuel (2017). *CORE – Economics for a Changing World*. CORE eBook.

Castoriadis, Cornelius (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. (Translated by Kathleen Blamey, 1987). Polity Press.

Chakravarty, Satya R. and Lugo, Maria Ana (2016). "Multidimensional Indicators of Inequality and Poverty," in Matthew D. Adler and Marc Fleurbaey (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Well-Being and Public Policy*. Oxford University Press.

Chatzidakis, Andreas; Hakim, Jamie; Littler, Jo; Rottenberg, Catherine; Segal, Lynne (The Care Collective) (2020). *The Care Manifesto – The politics of interdependence*. Verso.

Chomsky, Noam (2013). *On Anarchism*. The New Press.

Chomsky, Noam (2023). "The End of Organized Humanity," *The Poetry of Predicament*. Video Conference Recording. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY9PZvK6CZs. (8 February 2025)

Clark, Nick (2024). *Making local government work*. The New Zealand Initiative.

Cobb, John B. (Jr.) (2007) *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Second Edition). Westminster John Knox Press.

Cohen, Gerald A. (1990). "Equality of What? On Welfare, Goods, and Capabilities." *Cambridge University Press*. (Online: 17 August 2016)

Coote, Anna and Percy, Andrew (2020). *The Case for Universal Basic Services.* Polity

Costanza, Robert; de Groot, Rudolf; Braat, Leon; Kubiszewski, Ida; Fioramonti, Lorenzo; Sutton, Paul; Farber, Steve; Grasso, Monica (2017). "Twenty years of ecosystem services: How far have we come and how far do we still need to go?" *Ecosystem Services*. Vol. 28, Part A; December; pp. 1-16.

Crouch, Colin (2020). *Post-Democracy after the Crises*. Polity Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (2014). "The politics of consciousness," in Hämäläinen, Timo J and Michaelson, Juliet (eds). *Well-Being and Beyond: Broadening the Public and Policy Discourse*. Edward Elgar Publishing; Chapter 10, pp. 271-282.

Darwin, Charles (1859) (2003). *The Origin of Species*. 150th Anniversary Edition. Kindle.

Dasgupta, Partha (2021). *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*. London: HM Treasury.

Dawkins, Richard (2016). *The Selfish Gene: 40th anniversary edition.* Oxford University Press.

Dawkins, Richard (1996). *The blind watchmaker: why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design*, Norton, New York, 1996.

Deutsch, David (1996). *The Fabric of Reality: Towards a theory of everything.* Penguin.

Deutsch, David (2011). *The Beginning of Infinity: Explanations that transform the world.* Penguin.

Deutsch, David (2020). "Karl Popper and the Beginning of Infinity," *The Popperian Podcast #1.* 29 November. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKO8YRwVVu8

Deutsch, David (2021). "David Deutsch on the Infinite Reach of Knowledge," *The TED Interview*. 1 July. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEfG1PHNB64

Deutsch, David (2023 a). "The fabric of reality." *The Tim Ferriss Show*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfWbcrObpUY&pp=0gcJCdgAo7VqN5tD (25 March).

Deutsch, David (2023 b). "What rationality isn't." *David Deutsch Physicist.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPAaHQCtG0o (22 July).

Deutsch, David (2024 a). "Presentation," *Breakthrough Discuss 2024: A Cosmic Tapestry for Exploration* conference. 18-19 July. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UitIPlfGckQ

Deutsch, David (2024 b). "The Era of Man, Popper, and Western Civilisation." Interview with Arjun Khemani. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3FzAjgPztU 12 November.

Deutsch, David and Pinker, Steven (2023). "AGI, P(Doom), and the Enemies of Progress," *The Joe Walker Podcast* (20 December).

Deutsch, David and Rees, Martin (2015). "Optimism, Knowledge and the Future of Enlightenment," *RSA Event*. 20 October.

Diener, Ed and Biswas-Diener, Robert (2019). "Well-Being Interventions to Improve Societies," in: *Global Happiness and Well-being – Policy Report 2019*, Chapter 6; Global Council for Happiness and Wellbeing.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor (1918). *Notes from Underground.* (Translated by Constance Garnett.) The McMillan Company.

Douglas, Roger and MacCulloch, Robert (2017), "Welfare: Savings Not Taxation". *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 10632, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2940622 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2940622

Dworkin, Ronald (2011). *Justice for Hedgehogs*. The Belknap Press, London.

Etilé, Fabrice; Frijters, Paul; Johnston, David W.; Shields, Michael A. (2021). "Measuring Resilience to Major Life Events," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*. No. 191; pp. 598-619.

Frijters, Paul and Krekel, Christian (2021). *A Handbook for Well-being Policy Making: History, Theory, Measurement, Implementation, and Examples*. Oxford University Press.

Fukuyama, Francis (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. Free Press.

Gawande, Atul (2010). *The Checklist Manifesto: How to get things right*. Profile Books.

Gopnik, Adam (2019). *A Thousand Small Sanities*. Basic Books.

Graeber, David (2024). *The Ultimate Hidden Truth of the World.* Allen Lane.

Graeber, David and Wengrow, David (2021). *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. Penguin Books (Allen Lane)

Graeber, David (2004). *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Prickly Paradigm Press.

Gray, Barbara and Purdy, Jill (2018). *Collaborating for Our Future – multistakeholder partnerships for solving complex problems.* Oxford University Press.

Grayling, A.C. (2018). *Democracy and its Crisis*. London: Oneworld.

Grayling, A. C. (2019). *The History of Philosophy*. Viking (Penguin Books).

Grossman, Neal (2003). *The Spirit of Spinoza – Healing the Mind*. ICRL Press.

Grossman, Neal (2019). *Conversations with Socrates and Plato – How the Post-Materialist Social Order Can Solve the Challenges of Modern Life and Ensure Our Survival*. Iff Books.

Growiec, Katarzyna; Growiec, Jakub; and Kamiński, Bogumil (2017). "Mapping The Dimensions of Social Capital." *SGH KAE Working Paper Series*, No. 2017/025.

Habermas, Jürgen et al. (2010). *An awareness of what is Missing: Faith and reason in a post-secular age.* Polity.

Hämäläinen, Timo J and Michaelson, Juliet (2014) (eds). *Well-Being and Beyond: Broadening the Public and Policy Discourse*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Harari, Yuval Noah (2014). *Sapiens – A Brief History of Humankind*. Vintage.

Harari, Yuval Noah (2016). *Homo Deus – A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Vintage.

Harari, Yuval Noah (2018). "Yuval Noah Harari: the myth of freedom," *The Guardian*. 14 September.

Harari, Yuval Noah (2021). *21 Lessons for the 21st Century.* Vintage Arrow - Mass Market.

Haslett, Julia (2012). *An Encounter with Simone Weil.* A documentary written, directed and produced by Julia Haslett.

Hayek, Friedrich A (1974). "The Pretence of Knowledge," *The American Economic Review.* December 1989. Vol. 79, No. 6.

Helliwell, John H. (2019). "Measuring and Using Happiness to Support Public Policies", *NBER Working Paper Series*, December 2019.

Higgins, Winton (2016). "Treading the Path with Care," *Tricycle* (the Buddhist Review), Winter.

Higgins, Winton (2019). *Revamp: writings on secular Buddhism*, Wellington: Tuwhiri.

Hobbes, Thomas (1651). *Leviathan*. 2017 Penguin Classics edition.

Horgan, John (1997). *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age*. Little, Brown.

Hossenfelder, Sabine (2022). *Existential Physics: A Scientist's Guide to Life's Biggest Questions*. Penguin Random House.

Howe, Sophie (2022). "I call it the good ancestors test," *New Scientist – Features Interview*. By Graham Lawton. 9 July 2022.

Howe, Sophie (2023). New Zealand webinar with Sophie Howe—Intergenerational Stewardship for Aotearoa NZ. (https://informedfutures.org/koi-tu-webinar-sophie-howe/) (June).

Ianulardo, Giancarlo and Stella, Aldo (2022), "Towards a unity of sense: a critical analysis of the concept of relation in methodological individualism and holism in economics," *The Journal of Philosophical Economics: Reflections on Economic and Social Issues*, XV (1), 196-226

Inglehart, Ronald (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton University Press.

Innes, Abby (2024). "On the Impossibility of Neoliberal Success: A Response to Michael Jobs," *The Political Quarterly*. Vol. 95, Issue 4, October/December. Pp. 616-621.

Joseph, Jonathan (2018). *Varieties of Resilience: Studies in Governmentality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joseph, Jonathan and McGregor, J. Allister (2020). *Well-being, Resilience and Sustainability – The New Trinity of Governance*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Judt, Tony (2010). *Ill Fares the Land*. Allen Lane (Penguin Books).

Kafka, Franz (1931). *Zur Frage der Gesetze* [*The problem of our law*], translated by Michael Hoffman.

Kalin, Ibrahim (2004). "Jili, Abd al-Karim al-". In Phyllis G. Jestice (ed.). *Holy People of the World: A Cross-cultural Encyclopedia*. ABC-CLIO. p. 430. ISBN 9781576073551.

Karacaoglu, Girol (2021). *Love you: public policy for intergenerational wellbeing*. Tuwhiri.

Karacaoglu, Girol (2024). *Resilient Democratic Governance – Navigating Unity in Diversity for Sustainable Well-being*. Emerald.

Karacaoglu, Girol and Krawczyk, Jacek B (2021). "Public Policy, Systemic Resilience, and Viability Theory," *Metroeconomica*. Vol. 72, Issue 4, pp. 826-48.

Karacaoglu, Girol; King, Anita; and Krawczyk, Jacek B (2019). *Intergenerational Wellbeing and Public Policy: an integrated environmental, social, and economic framework*. Springer.

Karatani, Kojin (2017). *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy* (translated by Joseph A Murphy). Duke University Press.

Katz, Bruce and Novak, Jeremy (2017). *The New Localism: How cities can thrive in the new age of populism*. Brookings Institution Press (Washington, D.C.).

Kaufmann, Walter (1956). *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre.* Meridian Books, New York.

Kersgaard, Eliot (2020). "Life's Universal Patterns," *Life's Universal Patterns*. ILLUMINATION | Medium https://eliotkersgaard.medium.com/the-case-for-connecting-kids-to-nature-ef8c046f585d.

Kinna, Ruth (2019). *The Government of No One: The Theory and Practice of Anarchism*. Pelican Books.

Krakauer, David (2023). "Complexity, Agency, and Information," *Mindscape - Interview with Sean Carroll* (11 July). https://www.preposterousuniverse.com/

Kronauer, Martin (2024). "The legacy of neoliberalism and the rise of the extreme Right," *Working Paper, No 243/2024, Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin*, Institute for International Political Economy (IPE), Berlin.

Kropotkin, Peter (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*. Sanage Publishing.

Kropotkin, Peter (1896). "The State: Its Historic Role," *invited lecture* (hosted by Jean Grave, editor of Les Temps Nouveaux), in the Milles Colonnes Hall in Paris, in March 1896.

Kumar, Satish (2017). *Soil, Soul, Society: A New Trinity for Our Time*. Leaping Hare Press.

Kumar, Satish (2021). "We need a London School of Ecology and Economics," *Ecologist* (informed by nature). 11 January.

Landauer, Gustav (2010). *Revolution and Other Writings: A political reader.* (Edited by Gabriel Kuhn). PM Press.

Lansley, Stewart (2021). *The Richer, The Poorer: How Britain Enriched the Few and Failed the Poor. A 200-Year History*. Policy Press.

Laozi, Tzu (551-479 BCE). *Tao Te Ching – The Book of The Way*. Translated by Stephen Mitchell. Audio Version (on YouTube), last updated in July 1995.

Larrouqué, Damien (2023). "Damn neo-liberalism," (translated by Tiam Goudarzi), *Collége de France, Books and Ideas*. Review of Pierre Dardot, Haud Guéguen, Christian Laval, Pierre Sauvêtre, *Le choix de la guerre civile: une autre histoire du néolibéralisme*. Lux (27 June).

Lee, Neil (2024). *Innovation for the Masses: How to Share the Benefits of the High-Tech Economy*. University of California Press.

Locke, John (1690). "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government," *Of Civil Government, Two Treatises*. Edited by Thomas Hollis. Liberty Fund Inc.

Lovelock, James (2000). *Gaia – a new look at life on earth*. Oxford University Press.

Löwy, Michael (1988). *Redemption and Utopia – Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe – a Study in Elective Affinity* (2017 Translation by Hope Heaney). Verso.

Löwy, Michael (2001). *Fire Alarm* (2017 Translation by Chris Turner). Verso.

Magee, Brian (1999). *Philosophy and the Real World: An Introduction to Karl Popper.* Open Court.

Mancuso, Stefano (2021). *The Nation of Plants: A radical manifesto for humans*. Profile Books.

Mansoori, Issa (2025). "A Primer on the Epistemology of New Commons," *ZBW*. Leibniz Information Centre for Economics, Kiel, Hamburg

Marshall, Peter (2010). *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. PM Press.

Maslow, Abraham (1943). "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review*. 50(4), 370-96.

Mathews, David (2020). *With the People: An introduction to an idea*. A Cousins Research Group Report. Kettering Foundation.

McDermott, John J. (1981) (editor). *The Philosophy of John Dewey.* University of Chicago Press.

McKinlay, Peter (2019). "Localism—let's do this," *Policy Quarterly.* Vol. 15, Issue 2, May, pp. 38-43.

McKinlay, Peter (2022). *Local Government Reform in New Zealand: The Potential for Promoting Democratic Practices and Fostering Community Well-being*. Kettering Foundation.

McKinlay, Peter (2023). "Future for Local Government Report – Time for a reality check?" (8 July). *Private Memorandum.* Wellington, New Zealand.

Menon, Ravi (2022). "Yes, to Digital Asset Innovation, No to Cryptocurrency Speculation". *Opening Address at Green Shoots Seminar*. (29 August). Monetary Authority of Singapore.

Milton, Steve (2023). "Empowering Communities in Wiltshire, UK". https://youtu.be/hm7i4wKYvuo

Mouffe, Chantal (2013). *Hegemony, radical democracy, and the political*. Edited by James Martin. Routledge.

Muellbauer, John (2023). "Why we need a green land value tax and how to design it," *Department of Economics Discussion Paper Series, University of Oxford*. # 1010.

Mulgan, Geoff (2022). *Another World is Possible: How to Reignite Social and Political Imagination.* Hurst Publishers.

National Research Council (2012). *Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Needham, Catherine; Mangan, Catherine (2014). *The 21st Century Public Servant*. https://21stcenturypublicservant.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/21-century-report-281014.pdf

Niebuhr, Reinhold (1932 (2017)). *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A study in ethics and politics*. Westminster John Knox Press.

Niebuhr, Reinhold (1941 (2018)). *Nature and Destiny of Man: Volume One: Human Nature*. Martino Fine Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1901) [2022] *The Will to Power.* (Translated by Anthony M. Ludovici). Grapevine India Publishers.

North, Douglass C (1991). "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*; Vol 5(1), pp. 640-55.

Nurse, Sir Paul (2020). *What is Life?* Radio New Zealand Interview with Jim Mora. (15 November) https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/sunday/audio/2018772865/sir-paul-nurse-what-is-life

Nussbaum, Martha C (2000). *Women and Human Development*. Cambridge University Press.

OECD (2024). *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions.* OECD, Paris.

Orwell, George (1938) (2015). *Homage to Catalonia*. Mariner Books.

Ostrom, Elinor (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.* Cambridge University Press.

Ostrom, Elinor (2009). "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems," *Nobel Prize Lecture*. Stockholm.

Palmer, Tim (2022). *The Primacy of Doubt*. Oxford University Press.

Penrose, Roger (2016). *The Emperor's New Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Penrose, Roger (2022). *Closer to Truth* interview with host Robert Lawrence Kuhn on the relationship between mathematics, the mind, and the physical universe. https://mindmatters.ai/2023/01/nobelist-roger-penrose-talks-about-his-impossible-triangle/

Popper, Karl R. (1967). "Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject." *Third International Congress for Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*, 25 August 1967. Amsterdam.

Popper, Karl R (1972). *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*. Revised Edition. Oxford University Press.

Popper, Karl R (2002). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery.* Routledge.

Popper, Karl R (1945). *The Open Society and its Enemies* (two volumes). Routledge.

Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1994). *What is Property?* Cambridge University Press.

Puett, Michael and Gross-Loh, Christine (2016). *The Path – A new way to think about everything*. Viking.

Pullman, Philip (2020). "Inspiration and metaphor in science," *The New Scientist interview.* (Rowan Hooper) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4hnaac7ezs

Putnam, Robert D (1994). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. (With Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y Nanetti). Princeton University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. (2020). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*. (Revised and updated). Simon & Schuster.

Rajan, Raghuram (2019). *The Third Pillar – the Revival of Community in a Polarised World*. William Collins.

Rajan, Raghuram (2020). "Thomas Piketty's 'Capital and Ideology': scholarship without solutions". *Financial Times*. 15 February. https://www.ft.com/content/5a393b5a-4f23-11ea-95a0-43d18ec715f5

Rawls, John (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press.

Read, Herbert (1949). "Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism," in: *Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics*. Faber & Faber.

Rodrik, Dani (2022). "The New Productivism Paradigm," *Project Syndicate*. 5 July.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques [(1762), (1998)]. *The Social Contract.* Penguin.

Rovelli, Carlo (2020). *There are Places in the World where Rules are Less Important than Kindness*. Penguin.

Rustagi, Devesh (2024). "Historical Self-Governance and Norms of Cooperation," *CAGE Working Paper*, No. 718, August.

Sandel, Michael J (2022). *Democracy's Discontent: A New Edition for Our Perilous Times.* Belknap Press.

Sandel, Michael J (2013). "What Money can't Buy—the Moral Limits of Markets." *TED Talks*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvDpY-HyBlgc

Santa Fe Institute (2024). *Complexity Economics: A Different Framework for Economic Thought*. Santa Fe Institute.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1946 (2007)). *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Yale University Press.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1960). "The Responsibility of the Writer," in: Haskell M. Block and Herman Salinger (eds), *The Creative Vision; Modern European Writers on Their Art*. Grove Press.

Savioli, Marco and Patuelli, Roberto (2016). "Social Capital, Institutions, and Policy Making," *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 10.2139/ssrn.2792161.

Scheidel, Walter (2018). *The great leveler: Violence and the history of inequality from the Stone Age to the twenty-first century*. Princeton University Press.

Schopenhauer, Arthur (1966). *The World as Will and Representation.* (Translated by E. F. J. Payne). Dover Publications.

Scoones, Ian (2024). *Navigating Uncertainty – Radical Rethinking for a Turbulent World.* Polity Press.

Scott, James C. (2012). *Two Cheers for Anarchism*. Princeton University Press.

Scott, James C. (2010). *The Art of Not Being Governed—An anarchist history of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale Agrarian Studies Series.

Schumacher, Ernst (1973). *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. Harper Perennial.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1934). *The theory of economic development: an inquiry into profits, capital, credit, interest, and the business cycle.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Harper & Brothers.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1954). *History of Economic Analysis*. Allen & Unwin.

Segall, Matthew (2018). "Whitehead's Way Beyond Postmodernism," YouTube https://footnotes2plato.com/2018/05/27/whiteheads-way-beyond-postmodernism/

Segall, Matthew D. (2021). "Alfred North Whitehead's Philosophy of Organisms," *Dartington Trust Presentation*. YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRA-QoOGPPg)

Segall, Seth Z (2015). "Dōgen, Spinoza, and Whitehead," *The Existential Buddhist – dharma without dogma*. 26 July. https://www.existentialbuddhist.com/2015/07/dogen-spinoza-and-whitehead/

Segall, Seth Z (2023). *The House We Live in: Virtue, Wisdom, and Pluralism*. Equinox Publishing.

Seidman, Steven (1989). *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics – a Reader*. (Edited) Beacon Press.

Sen, Amartya K. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sen, Amartya K. (2009). *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge. Belknap.

Sen, Amartya K. (2017). *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*. (Expanded edition). Penguin Books.

Sheldrake, Merlin (2020). *Entangled Life: how fungi make our worlds, change our minds, and shape our futures*. Vintage.

Sheldrake, Rupert (2020). *The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry* (New Edition). Coronet.

Smith, Conal (2018). "TacklingPovertyNZ—the nature of poverty in New Zealand and ways to address it". *Policy Quarterly*, 14(1), February. https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/pq/issue/view/553

Smuts, Jan Christiaan (1926). *Holism and Evolution*. Macmillan and Company.

Snyder, Gary (1961). "Buddhist Anarchism," *Journal for the Protection of All Beings* #1 (City Lights, 1961). For a revised version (1969), published under the title, "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution," Earth Household (New Directions, 1969).

Social Investment Agency (2024). "Social Investment in New Zealand," *Social Investment Agency*. Home | Social Investment Agency, https://sia.govt.nz/

Social Investment, UK (2024). "Social Investment in the UK," *Inclusive Economy*. Inclusive Economy—GOV.UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/social-investment#:~:text=Social%2520Investment%2520and%2520the%2520Social%2520Sector,-Social%2520investment%2520is&text=This%2520type%2520of%2520finance%2520can,largest%2520social%2520investment%2520wholesale%2520institution.) UK Government.

Solneman, K. H. Z. (1977). *An Anarchist Manifesto – The Manifesto of Peace and Freedom (The Alternative to the Communist Manifesto.)* MACKAY-GESELLSCHAFT, Germany.

Soros, George (2003). *The Alchemy of Finance.* Wiley.

Spinoza, Baruch (1670) (1884) *A Theologico-Political Treatise (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus)*. Anodos Books.

Spinoza, Baruch (1677) (1996). *Ethics*. Penguin Books.

Spinoza, Baruch (2012). *The Chief Works of Benedict De Spinoza: Introduction. Tractatus Theologico-politicus. Tractatus Politicus*. Nabu Press.

Spinoza, Baruch (1985). *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (two volumes). Translated by Edwin Curley. Princeton University Press.

Stiglitz, Joseph E and Rosengard, Jay K (2015). *Economics of the Public Sector* (4th edition). W. W. Norton & Company.

Taleb, Nassim Nicholas (2014). *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder*. Random House.

Tang, Audrey (2022). "What the World Can Learn from Taiwan's Digital Democracy," *Wired* (24 January). https://www.wired.co.uk/article/global-neighbourhoods-digital-democracy

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre (2008 (1955)). *The Phenomenon of Man*. Harper Perennial.

The Temporal Nomad (2025). "Dostoevsky—the man who understood life," YouTube, 9 February. https://youtu.be/L8eliPyT1zA?si=YVF-beW3DGkSPBUye

Thera, Nyanavira (2009). *Notes on Dhamma*. Vollezelle, Belgium: Path Press Publications.

Tipler, Frank J (1994). *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*. Doubleday

Viney, Wayne (2022). *William James's Pluralism: An antidote for contemporary extremism and absolutism.* Routledge.

Ward, Colin (2004). *Anarchism—A very short introduction.* Oxford University Press.

Ward, Colin (2018). *Anarchy in Action.* PM Press.

Weil, Simone (1952). *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind* (translated by Arthur Wills). Routledge.

Whitehead, Alfred N (1978). *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. Free Press.

Wilson, David Sloan (2020). *This View of Life: Completing the Darwinian Revolution.* Knopf US.

Wilson, David Sloan (2024). "Assessing the Complexity/Evolution Paradigm," with Eric Beinhocker. *ProSocial World Podcast.* 7 August. https://www.prosocial.world/people/eric-beinhocker#:~:text=Paradigm%2C%20with%20Eric-,Beihocker.

Wilson, David Sloan (2025). "Happy Darwin Day! How Darwinism Can Help Us Flourish in 2025," *ProSocial World.* 12 February. https://www.prosocial.world/posts/happy-darwin-day-how-darwinism-can-help-us-flourish-in-2025#:~:text=Day!%20How%20Darwinism-,Can,-Help%20Us%20Flourish

Wilson, David Sloan and Snower, Dennis J (2024). "Announcing a New Paradigm for Economics and Beyond," *Evonomics.* 14 April.

Woodcock, George (1962). *Anarchism - A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*. World Publishing Company.

Wouk, Herman (2010). *The Language God Talks: On Science and Religion.* Little, Brown and Company.

Zakaria, Fareed (2007). *The Future of Freedom - Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad.* W. W. Norton.

Zerzan, John (2008). *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilisation*. Feral House.

Žižek, Slavoj (2012). *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism Defense of Lost Causes.* Verso Books.

Žižek, Slavoj (2015). *A Defence of Universalism.* Online lecture. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2od4on3iCvc

Žižek, Slavoj (2016). *The Great Challenge of the Left.* Online lecture. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2O6f2R9PZI

Žižek, Slavoj (2017). *In Defense of Lost Causes.* Verso Books.

Žižek, Slavoj (2023). *Freedom – A Disease without Cure.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Zwolinski, Matt and Tomasi, John (2023). *The Individualists – Radicals, Reactionaries, and the Struggle for the Soul of Libertarianism.* Princeton University Press.

About the author

Dr Girol Karacaoglu BA MBA Bogazici (Istanbul, Turkey), PhD University of Hawaii is an Adjunct Professor in the Wellington School of Business and Government at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand.

Girol was the head of the School of Government at Victoria University until 30 June 2022. He came to VUW from the New Zealand Treasury, where he served as chief economist. Before then, he was the chief executive of PSIS (now the Co-operative Bank of New Zealand) for nine years.

His current research interest is in public policy—an integrated approach to transformative environmental, social, political, and economic policies toward improving intergenerational well-being.

End notes

[1] Spinoza, 1985
[2] Spinoza, 1985. This book is addressed to the public, not an academic audience. References are provided sporadically, when specific passages are cited. A full set of references on which this book draws is provided at the end of the book.
[3] Sheldrake, R, 2020, p. 184.
[4] Cited in Ward, 2004, p. 75.
[5] Kindle page 1; see also Lovelock, 2020.
[6] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016, p. 126.
[7] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016, p. 143.
[8] Segall, M., 2018.
[9] Hossenfelder, 2022, p. 201.
[10] Gopnik, 2019, p. 60.
[11] Hossenfelder, 2022, p. 69.
[12] Kumar, 2021.
[13] Popper, 1945; Magee, 1999, p. 91.
[14] Teilhard de Chardin (Pierre (2008 (1955)).
[15] Deutsch, 2012.
[16] I owe all this to Deutsch, 1996, 2011, 2015, 2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b.
[17] Deutsch, 2012.
[18] Sheldrake, R., 2020, Kp. 13.
[19] Wouk, 2010.
[20] See Hossenfelder, 2022, pp. 45-6, for a very interesting conversation with Tim Palmer on whether mathematics is just a tool for describing the world, or is the world.
[21] Hossenfelder, 2022.
[22] Magee, 1999; Deutsch, 2011.
[23] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016, pp. 25–27.
[24] Puett and Goss-Loh, 2016, pp. 55–60.
[25] Grossman, 2003, 2009.
[26] Hossenfelder, 2022, p. 127.
[27] Harari, 2018, 2021.
[28] Deutsch, 2012.
[29] Deutsch, 2024.
[30] Deutsch, 2011, p. 197.
[31] Laozi, 551–479 BCE.
[32] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016, pp. 13–14.
[33] See Scoones, 2024 for a detailed and most thoughtful exploration of this theme, with several practical examples from around the world.
[34] Abreu, *et al.*, 2022, p. 26.
[35] Chakravarty and Lugo, 2016, p. 246.
[36] See Scones, 2024 for a very thoughtful, complementary, discussion of the main message of this section.
[37] Quoted by Philip Pullman, 2020.
[38] Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 275.
[39] Azan, 2022.
[40] See, for example Berlin, 1965, 1972, 1999.
[41] William Blake, quoted by Philip Pullman, 2020.

[42] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016, pp. 70-71.
[43] Segall, S., 2015.
[44] Berlin, 1972.
[45] Krakauer, 2023.
[46] Ronald Inglehart's (1977) work extends Maslow's fundamental insights about the hierarchy of needs from the individual to the social level, as well as providing evidence to support this extension.
[47] Cohen, 1991.
[48] Niebuhr, 1932, p. 18.
[49] Niebuhr, 1932, p. 1.
[50] Ianulardo and Stella, 2022.
[51] See also, Frijters and Krekel, 2021, chapter 2; and Dieter and Biswas-Dieter, 2019.
[52] As explained by Seidman, 1989.
[53] Gopnik, 2019, p. 65; see also Guiso, *et al*., 2016.
[54] Gopnik, 2019, p. 64.
[55] Gopnik, 2019, p. 72.
[56] Ward, 2004, pp. 36–37.
[57] McKinlay, 2022.
[58] Carattini and Roesti, 2020.
[59] Growiec, *et al*., 2017.
[60] As explained by Gopnik, 2019, pp. 64-6; also see Ianulardo and Stella, 2022.
[61] Zakaria, 2007, p. 36.
[62] Mancuso, 2021.
[63] As narrated and discussed by Deutsch, 2024 b.
[64] Palmer, 2022, p. 55; Dasgupta, 2021.
[65] Segall, S., 2015.
[66] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016.
[67] Löwy, 1988, 2001.
[68] See, e.g., McDermott, 1981 and Bernstein, 2020.
[69] Sheldrake, R., 2020, pp. 48–51.
[70] Deutsch, 2023.
[71] Savioli and Patuelli, 2016.
[72] See Eiffe, 2010, p. 8 and Sen, 2004.
[73] Costanza, *et al*., 2017, p. 8.
[74] Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016, p. 67.
[75] Niebuhr, 1932, p. 9.
[76] Niebuhr, 1932, pp. xxii–xxiv.
[77] See Scones, 2024 for a very thoughtful, complementary, discussion of the main message of this section.
[78] See Hayek (1974) Friedrich Hayek's Nobel Prize lecture, for detail on this point.
[79] See, for example, Beinhocker, 2004, 2007, 2016 and Wilson, 2024.
[80] As narrated by David Krakauer, 2023.
[81] See Soros, 2003.
[82] Sartre, 1946.
[83] These themes and contrasts are shared in the writings of, among others, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre. See, for example, Kaufmann (nnnn).
[84] This distinction is useful for my purposes, although not generally adopted.

[85] See Zakaria, 2007, Chapter 1 for an extremely useful summary of the history of the idea of human liberty in a social setting, namely freedom of the individual from arbitrary authority, and its Roman roots.
[86] This is a point also made by Yuval Harari in numerous publications and presentations, e.g., Harari, 2018, 2021.
[87] Gray, 2019, p. 217.
[88] Reading from Weil in Haslett, 2012.
[89] Spinoza, 1677; Segall, S., 2015.
[90] Kropotkin, 1902; Bregman, 2020; Graeber and Wengrow, 2021; Harari, 2014.
[91] Magee, 1999; Popper, 1945.
[92] Marshall, 210, Kindle page 703.
[93] Zwolinski and Tomasi, 2023, p. 218. See also Dawkins, 2016.
[94] Also see Atkins, Wilson, and Hayes, 2021 and Ostrom, 1990, 2009 on design principles for effective group cooperation.
[95] Niebuhr, 1932, pp. 25–26.
[96] Dworkin, 2011, p. 10.
[97] Magee, 1999, pp. 88–89.
[98] Berlin, 1969.
[99] Gray, 2019, p. 216.
[100] Reading from Weil in Haslett, 2012.
[101] Harari, 2018.
[102] Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 274.
[103] Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, pp. 274–75.
[104] Kafka, 1917.
[105] Niebuhr, 1932 (2017), pp. 14–15.
[106] Ward, 2004, p. 33.
[107] Chomsky, 2013.
[108] See Graeber and Wengrow, 2021.
[109] Larrouqué, 2023.
[110] Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012.
[111] Karatani, 2017, p. 69.
[112] Gopnik, 2019, p. 79.
[113] Dworkin, 2011.
[114] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Workingmen%27s_Association
[115] Bookchin, 1991, p. 6.
[116] Kronauer, 2024, p. 3.
[117] I borrow the term 'enabler' in this context, from Dasgupta, 2021, and Frijters and Krekel, 2021.
[118] Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016.
[119] Ward, 2004, p. 33.
[120] Bookchin, 2015, p. 24.
[121] Bookchin, 2015, p. 23.
[122] Quoted in Gopnik, 2019, p. 222.
[123] National Research Council, 2012; Brunnermeier, 2021; Joseph and McGregor, 2021.
[124] Taleb, 2014.
[125] See Coote and Percy, 2020.
[126] See Acemoglu, 2019 on why universal basic income is a bad idea.
[127] As quoted by Douglas and MacCulloch, 2017, p. 13.
[128] *Ibid,* p. 10.

[129] To paraphrase Banerjee and Duflo's, 2019 'Cash and Care' proposal.
[130] Mathews, 2020; see also Rajan, 2019 on 'inclusive communities'.
[131] See also Segall, S., 2023.
[132] See also, Bernstein, 2002.
[133] Bookchin, 2006, p. 81.
[134] Puett and Gross-Ho, 2016, p. 181.
[135] Solneman, 1977.
[136] Ward, 2004.
[137] Quoted by Ward, 2004, pp. 70-71.
[138] Karatani, 2017, p. 133.
[139] Scott, 2012; Proudhon, 1994.
[140] Marshall, 2010, Kp. 226.
[141] Marshall, 2010, Kp. 15; see also Zwolinski and Tomasi, 2023.
[142] Marshall, 2010, Kp. 703.
[143] Marshall, 210, Kp. 704.
[144] Solneman, 1977.
[145] Bookchin, 2015, p. 26.
[146] Bookchin, 2006, pp. 99–100.
[147]As reported in Bookchin, 2020.
[148] Bookchin, 2015, p. 27.
[149] Bookchin, 2015, p. 28.
[150] Ward, 2004, p. 40 and chapter 9; Ward, 2018.
[151] See also, Ward, 2018.
[152] Marshall, 2010, p. 617.
[153] Bookchin, 2006, p. 94.
[154] Marshall, 2010, Kp 613.
[155] See also Chatzidakis, *et al*., 2020.
[156] Rajan, 2019, p. 105.
[157] Solneman, 1977.
[158] Stiglitz and Rosengard, 2015.
[159] Sandel, 2013.
[160] Deutsch, 2012, chapter 9.
[161] See Wilson and Snower, 2024 and Wilson, 2025 and the references cited there.
[162] As summarised by Juliet Michaelson and Timo J. Hämäläinen (2014) in their Introduction (p. 10).
[163] Schumpeter, 1954, II, p. 97; see also Azan, 2022.
[164] McKinlay, 2022, 2023.
[165] OECD, 2024.
[166] Cited in Ward, 2004, p. 14.
[167] Magee, 1999, p. 96; attributed to Levinson (*In Defense of Plato*), p. 17.
[168] Deutsch, 2012, p 2016.
[169] Berlin, 1972.
[170] Mouffe, 2013.
[171] Aghion *et al*., 2021, p. 280.
[172] Menon, 2022.
[173] https://www.sg101.gov.sg/social-national-identity/sharedidentity
[174] https://www.sg/emergingstrongerconversations/national-identity-shared-values
[175] Howe (2022, 2023).
[176] Tang, 2022.

[177] Needham and Mangan, 2014, p. 3.
[178] Milton, 2023.
[179] Higgins, 2016.
[180] Deutsch, 2011, chapter 9, pp. 216-218.
[181] Lee (2024) explores the interaction between ideas, technology, innovation, and institutions in generating shared prosperity.
[182] Laozi, 551–479 BCE.
[183] Deutsch, 2020, 2021.